

Bolesława Proskurowska¹

Memories

I was born on 28th October 1914 in Łódź. My name is Bolesława Proskurowska (nee Lipska). My grandparents on my mother's side came from Łódź, while my other grandparents lived in Częstochowa. My mother's father (my grandfather) was an industrialist and owned a house at No.8 Traugutt Street in Łódź. He died in 1937. My grandmother (my mother's mother) perished later in Częstochowa. My father's parents lived in Częstochowa. My father's mother died in 1928. My grandfather (my father's father) was an industrialist who died in 1937. As long as I can remember, my grandparents already lived in Częstochowa. They had a very large apartment which encompassed the entire second floor of a building on Kościuszko Street, the ground floor of which, today, is occupied by PKO (Bank). I grew up in this apartment. During my entire infancy and youth, I live in Franke House, at 14 Aleja NMP. For a short time, we lived at 55 Jasnogórska Street. Due to the fact that we lived on the third floor and it was hard for my father to climb the stairs, we moved to 28 Kilińska Street. It was a brand new building, with beautiful, large apartments. We were the first occupants of this new building. The Germans threw us out of this apartment in 1940. At the time, they closed off Kilińska Street and threw out all of the Jews who lived there.

My father graduated from a real high school in Kraków. My grandfather took him to Kraków because he didn't want him to go to a Russian high school. High schools in the Austro-Hungarian area had a more liberal policy towards ethnic minorities than did those within the Russian annexed territory. At the high school my father attended, classes were conducted in Polish and German. My father graduated from university in Leipzig, Germany. Together with his father and brother, he ran a timber mill, a bindery and a tannery. The production of timber products was a tradition in the Lipski family. After the War, only the real estate remained, owned by eight partners, me being one of them. I am the administrator of this real estate. My father was actively involved in the Jewish community. He attended the New Synagogue during the High Holydays. On Yom Kippur, he would also take me and my sister to synagogue.

My mother studied foreign languages in Brussels, Belgium. Her sister studied piano at the conservatorium in that same city. She met my father while on vacation. She married him

¹ Mrs Bolesława Proskurowska, a Jewish resident of Częstochowa, lived for 92 years. She died in August 2006. The memoirs published here are derived from interviews conducted with her during the final years of her life. In accordance with her wishes, after her death, she was buried in a grave next to her husband in the Kula Cemetery in Częstochowa.

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and did not return to her studies. In those times, it was not so important for girls to complete their studies.

My husband's grandfather was a *Cantonist*. His surname was Proskurowski, while his first name was most probably Dawid. He came from Charków. In Russia's former territory, where there were greater concentrations of Jews, Russian soldiers kidnapped small boys aged around 5 years old, took them to barracks and brought them up so that they would forget their own surnames and places of origin. My husband's grandfather remembered that he came from Charków. He did not remember his surname. They were taught trades which would be useful in time of war. He learned to make shoe-uppers and that became his trade. At around the age of 30, he was released from the army. In the army, he wasn't forced to change his religion – he was a very religious Jew. He married relatively late in life and had five or six children. He brought up all of them in a religious way of life. My father-in-law was the most religious of the whole family. My husband told me about the grandfather. My husband's father had neither wealth nor real estate. My father-in-law, the father of my husband, taught accounting and worked as an accountant. My husband's eldest brother studied chemistry in Grenoble. My husband also studied chemistry in Grenoble, but didn't finish because my father-in-law ran out of money to pay for his studies.

Within my family home, only Polish was spoken. I and my siblings studied foreign languages. Both parents ensured that their daughters knew foreign languages. All our children's books were first read by my mother. Later, they were read by our governess and, only then, were they given to us to read. Together with my sister, I went to the home of Mrs Zofia Słonimska for private lessons. She had her own small house on Foch Street, known at the time as Zielona Street. Her husband, the engineer Adam Słonimski, was possibly a cousin of Antoni Słonimski. The house, in which the lessons took place, was a single-storey home on a large block of land. Mr Słonimski's father had a tar-paper factory on that land. Lessons took place at long tables in a big room. Classes were held individually with the children depending upon the level – namely, the class to which one wanted to be admitted to in high school. I entered high school, only into third grade, when I was twelve years old. My sister went straight into the first class. I don't remember if the Jewish children in those classes, whose families we were friends with, went to elementary school. Those children took private lessons.

The J.Słowacki high school observed the *numerus clausus*. In every class, there 3-4 Jewish girls. Within the school it was varied. I was the biggest troublemaker in the whole school. On one beautiful day, when disturbances had begun at the colleges, and we were being taken up to Jasna Góra for all the national holidays, I said that I wouldn't go there anymore. It didn't appeal to me that everyone else was kneeling and that we were standing like pillars.

At that time, there were two state-run boys' high schools – the H.Sienkiewicz and R.Traugutt High Schools and one for girls - J.Słowacki High School. Apart from that, there

was a Jewish high school, in which the Hebrew language and Jewish history were taught. There was also a second private one— unfortunately, I can't remember who ran it. There was a private high school run by Dr. Akser, paternal uncle of Otton and Erwin Akser. He possibly came from the Małopolskie Province.

At my school, the J. Słowacki High School, discipline was high, but it was bearable. Following my rebellion, one of the Jewish mothers led a service for us in the synagogue and we no longer went to Jasna Góra.

After the final examinations, there were only two classmates whom I did not farewell. The incident I had with them took place during a stay in Olsztyn. In spring each year, we left the school for a week in Olsztyn, near Częstochowa. The school's parents' committee had a wonderful villa there. The teachers came to us. Each teacher came for a day and conducted a five-hour lesson in his/her subject. A certain classmate of mine said something, not realising that I was in the room. I can't remember exactly what annoyed me now. After many years, I met one of them after the War in Zakopane. I didn't even want to meet her, but she explained to me that she had been young and had been quite stupid. The paternal uncle of the other one was a priest. That priest and his sexton hid Jews. They were honoured for this after the War.

Of that episode at school, I remember that, writing an essay in Polish, I wrote about the "pseudo-attractive green sash knights". That really annoyed my classmate. At that time, during the University riots, the fascist National Democrats, as their insignia, wore a green ribbon in their lapel. My classmate wasn't annoyed at the green ribbon, but at the "pseudo-attractive" description of the boys.

During the winter of my second-last year of high school, we had dance lessons. Our counterparts from the Sienkiewicz and Traugutt High Schools came to us. During that time, I met a boy, whom I continued to see afterwards. Even though our high school forbade it, I went out on dates with him. After the War, I found out, from a Jewish classmate of his, that in the Traugutt High School they had held a court, charging that he had brought shame upon the school by going out with a Jewish girl from the Słowacki High School. He never told me that. That boy was later to become an officer-cadet and perished soon after the beginning of the War.

In 1932, I graduated from the Słowacki High School. I then studied commerce for two years at the Polish Free University in Łódź. During my studies in Łódź, the Nazis started to raise their heads there. There was a large group of Jewish youth in that city. I was in close contact with them and had no contact with the groups of Nazi youth. I was in Łódź only for a short time. I had to finish quickly because, three years after me, my sister was to study at university. My father would not be able to support two daughters at university at the same time - even more so as my father lost his wealth during the Great Depression. He was left with the real estate, from which he had no income. After graduating from the Free University, I worked as an accountant at the Northern Specialised Transport Company until the outbreak

of the War. I wasn't the chief accountant. I managed the files. The chief accountant was an older man my father's age. Generally speaking, it was good to have any work at that time.

I had siblings. One of my sisters was almost three years younger than me. The other sister was nine years younger. The first graduated in chemistry at the Jagiellonian University, and later lived in Lwów. Her boyfriend also began studies at the Jagiellonian University and completed them in Lwów. I had a wonderful childhood. I have the library of books, a clock and my father's desk. That furniture once stood in my father's office. By some stroke of luck, they managed to survive.

We were fearful after Hitler came to power in 1933. We knew that it was not good. Groups of Jews came to us, those who'd been thrown out of Germany and had been left at the Polish border. I don't remember if they had any connection with Poland or whether they had Polish origins. Poland had to accept them.

Our office closed a few days after the outbreak of the War. The boss, who had his offices in Warsaw and had Swiss citizenship, left for Switzerland. My mother, who was still alive at that time, left for Łódź, as Łódź was further east and she wanted to escape from Częstochowa. Częstochowa was very close to the border – there was a customs-house in Lubliniec. My father insisted that there would be no war. However, we left for Łódź with our mother. So, when the first bombs began to fall on Poland, we were in Łódź. After that, our father let us know that he had escaped and had already returned. I also found out that my fiancé was also in Częstochowa. He hadn't been mobilised even though he had volunteered for the army. There was a lack of uniforms and weapons, so he remained with his parents in Częstochowa. We returned from Łódź on a goods train at the end of September. There was an accident not far from Częstochowa – a wagon had gone off the tracks. I sustained a cut near the eyebrow during the accident. The goods wagon, in which animals were transported, was reinforced with heavy iron rings. The animals were tied to them so that they were immobilised during the journey. My head struck one of those rings during the accident.

In September 1940, after the Germans had thrown us out of the apartment in Kiliński Street, the Jewish Community Council allocated us two rooms in the apartment of a friend who had large apartments at the corner of Kopernik Street and Wolności Avenue. Perhaps it was at 18 Wolności Avenue. It was a corner building, two houses together- on the corner of Kopernik and Wolności. The friends, with whom we had two rooms, were named Dawidowicz. They crowded the apartments at that time as all the Jews had to be housed somewhere – those who'd been thrown out of their apartments. The owners lived in that apartment together with their daughter, their son and another woman whose husband was in the army. I don't know if he returned or not. Apparently he was in the East. Another woman with her child also lived there, my parents, me and my sister, as my other sister was in Lwów. On 31st December 1939, she crossed the green line and reached Lwów. She perhaps still had one more semester of chemistry to go. Her decision had been hastened by news of the fact that her boyfriend had got from Kraków to Lwów where he would finish his medical studies.

So she went to him there. She returned only after the Germans entered Lwów. A friend of my father's went there to bring them back to Częstochowa. Earlier, that same friend had brought back our grandmother from Łódź prior to the ghetto there being closed.

I got married on 22nd December 1940 in Częstochowa. My husband had no work at the beginning, but later got a job. Conditions were difficult, as his father had no work, so we couldn't get married earlier. He had to support his parents. I lived with my parents and he lived with his. His sister, her child and her husband, who was a doctor, came to us from Sosnowiec. My mother-in-law's sister also came. They all lived together. It was then that my husband could move out from his parents'. Generally speaking, living conditions in the Big and Small Ghettos were terrible. My parents had already gone by the time of the Small Ghetto, but they squeezed all who remained into those apartments.

After our wedding, we rented an apartment from a Jewish family at 19 Wolności Avenue, opposite my parents. However, that lasted for only a short time, because the Germans created the ghetto in March, or rather April 1941. So we all moved there and there we had to stay. My husband worked and had a pass to leave the ghetto for work. He even rode a bicycle to work at Jaskrowska Street.

Thanks to that work, the German *treuhänder* (trustee) registered me and my youngest sister as workers and we each had an *ausweis* (identity card). As workers in that plant, we underwent selection. They took us to the place where all the Jews were gathered during selections. And they simply indicated life or death, life or death. They were either sent in railway wagons to Treblinka or they remained.

There were a few of us women in the ammunition factory. My husband would perhaps remember what type of ammunition it was. I seem to recall that they were grenades, some sort of large shells – something like that. My husband, who knew the German *treuhänder*, was given the *ausweis*'s by the German. But there were a few people there who simply paid for the Germans to give them an *ausweis*.

The selections were conducted by Degenhart. He asked what those Jewish women were doing in the ammunition factory. That German, who absolutely wanted to pull us out of there, said, "They is no such task". The only work there was simply to make grenades or something from cast steel moulds. That mould had to have a bar with holes inserted into its centre, similar to a flute, for the flames to escape. We made plaits from straw and had to wrap these pipes so as not to cover the holes. The straw burnt away during the casting process. That was the production process.

He said quickly that there was no such thing. The other pretended to be clever and said something. That discussion took place in front of us, on the floor of the factory which, before the War, had been called "Metalurgia". It was a Jewish-owned factory on Krótka Street. A Jew, Zeninger, wandered around the factory settling various purchases from the *treuhänder*. He had a retarded son. Degenhart shot him in front of us. He grabbed the boy by the collar and shot him in the back of the head.

The Big Ghetto was on Warszawska Street. We lived in a house, which today no longer exists, in two small rooms with a kitchen – my parents, my grandmother brought from Łódź, my youngest sister, that sister who had returned from Lwów with her husband, my mother's sister with her children, and me with my husband. But, early in the evening after Yom Kippur, I, my husband and my younger sister Hanna went out and spent the night in the factory. From there, we went to the *akcja* because we knew that the railway wagons were already standing there. We said goodbye to our parents. At “Metalurgia”, we met up with my sister.

My father drew the Germans' attention to himself because he spoke German so beautifully. They returned him to the ghetto and he stayed there for some time. He was a worker at a so-called posting at 28 Garibaldi Street, where the Germans had a warehouse. One day, they summoned all the Jewish workers. My father was not amongst those required any longer and was sent to Treblinka. My mother was transported on the first day. They probably shot my grandmother. She was already stooped and walked with difficulty, so they probably figured that she wouldn't be able to walk to the railway wagons.

All those who were shot during the *akcje* and the selections were buried in Kawia Street. There was land there which, by order of the Germans, had had a huge ditch dug and into which all those Jews who'd been killed were tossed. As soon as they'd been murdered, they were taken there in carts - carts such as before the War were used for carrying meat. The top of the carts were covered and pulled by horses. Blood dripped from the bodies being carted away. During the *akcja*, we were led along that street. There were trickles of blood all along the length of the kerbs. Even when there were more of us in Częstochowa and there was some sort of commemoration and we were going to the Jewish cemetery, we would stop along the way at Kawia Street to lay a wreath and to light candles.

My first sister, together with her husband, perished in Częstochowa on 20th March 1943, during the so-called intelligentsia *akcja*. The Germans then murdered around 150 people who had remained alive after the first selection. Some of those people had children. Of those 150 or so people, around twenty child orphans remained. All those murdered during that *akcja* were buried in a mass grave at the Jewish cemetery in Częstochowa. My second sister left the ghetto, putting her fate to luck. Unfortunately, she was informed upon by Poles in Radomsko and perished in Auschwitz-Birkenau. She must have had something terrible inflicted upon her. Someone, who knew the details, did not want to tell me anything.

The Częstochowa Big Ghetto was not sealed. Jewish policemen stood at the exits of all the streets. Poles, if they had to, had the right to walk and ride across the ghetto area without any problems. Warszawska Street was the main road heading in the direction of Warsaw. I remember how the funeral procession of my schoolfriend's father went along Warszawska Street as this road was the one that led to Kula Cemetery.

We all had Star of David armbands. It was not permitted for us to leave the ghetto boundaries without a pass. I don't remember exactly, but I think the passes were endorsed

with how many times per day one was permitted to leave. My husband, as well as my father, had such a pass. He later lost it. We were only allowed to move around until a certain time determined by a curfew. There was also a curfew in the city outside the ghetto. One day, after curfew, we were watering a tomato plant growing in a box on the balcony. All of us, including my parents, were taken in by the Jewish police. We were later released.

People held severe grudges against the Jewish police. Some of these policemen were very decent, while others, being policemen had simply turned their heads. Above all, they demanded money for themselves from those fellow citizens whom they knew still had some money or who were trading somewhere outside the ghetto. They considered that all police officers needed to have high-boots, the so-called *oficerki*. So they took money from whomever they could. While it didn't affect me, some people harboured a grudge against these policemen for helping the Germans during the *akcje*. Before and during the *akcje*, Jews attempted to hide themselves in various hiding-places. There were such places like large basements or some storehouses where quite a number of people wanted to wait out the *akcja*. They counted on the fact that this would be okay. It was known that, for example, a few families were hiding in the attics of some houses. The Jewish policemen knew about this, After all, it was their own local environment. I never saw this, I only heard about it. I never had any direct experience of it, because I'd been penned up from the outset. But, apparently, they'd come into the yards and yell, "Jews! (in Yiddish) Jews! There's an amnesty! Come out!" And they came out – straight into the clutches of the Gestapo.

The *akcje* (deportations) lasted for a few weeks. The Germans simply designated some area of the ghetto and, one day, they would lead everyone from there to the station, load them onto the waiting railway wagons and take them away. Then they'd take a break in order to remove everything that had been left behind in the abandoned apartments. And then they got down to the next *akcja*. After the deportations and the liquidation of the Big Ghetto, the Germans created the Small Ghetto. The Small Ghetto was already a camp surrounded by barbed wire. Before six in the morning, a trumpeter sounded reveille. The group to which I belonged was the first one to leave for work.

At six o'clock every morning, I crossed the area of the old Small Ghetto to go to work at the "Enro" steel factory. My husband had worked there since the beginning of the War. One day, the Germans came and took my husband from our home. The *treuhänder*, who knew my husband, employed him at the "Enro" steel factory. I was also employed at that factory, but I had lighter work. I worked in the canteen kitchen and even a little in the office. At the beginning, we were quartered there. Nine or ten women slept on three mattresses. Later, we would come from the camp, from the Small Ghetto. Some *Volksdeutsch*, who'd been a hairdresser in Częstochowa before the War, would lead us. During the War, he suddenly felt, within himself, the call of his German blood and became a *Volksdeutscher*.

In the winter, as he led us in complete darkness, people would break away and escape into that darkness. The road along which he led us was, at that time, quite rustic. Now,

everything looks completely different. One day, a family, who'd managed to save their son during the first *akcja*, came out with us. It was little Moniuś who kept repeating, "My name is Moniuś Kwinta, but on the Aryan side I'll be called Marian Kowalski". The Kwinta family used to have a goose farm. Along the way from the ghetto to the "Enro" factory was the fenced-in building of the goose farm. It was dark and they had put little Moniuś between their legs, covering him with a broad coat. The German, who was leading us, didn't see this. A woman was already standing at the bend in the road. She was the caretaker of that goose farm. Mrs Kwinta leapt out from the column, grabbed Moniuś by the hand and all three disappeared into the darkness. At around 3:00pm, the Kwinta's rejoined the column returning from work and told us that they'd found a place for the child. Both of the Kwinta's were with us in the camp. They didn't know the fate of their child. No news of him had reached them. Sometimes, people didn't want to know anything in order not to betray anything while being beaten. No one knows how long they can endure under a beating. After the War, they came and told us that they were leaving Częstochowa. They had gone to collect their child from the woman with whom he'd been left. The woman told them, "Your Moniuś is no more. He got sick, died and we buried him". "So tell us where". She didn't want to tell them where because then there could have been an exhumation. As they were leaving, another woman, a neighbour of the other with whom Moniuś had been left, chased after them and told them, "Don't believe that the child got sick. She strangled him".

I never worked in the same place as did my husband. In "Enro", he was the manager of the adhesive plant which was under the direction of that same *treuhänder*. Later, we fled to Warsaw. Someone else took his place and, after our return to Częstochowa, they didn't give him back his old position. Anyway, soon after our return, the Small Ghetto was liquidated. I worked, in the main quite hard, at various tasks. In the camp, I also had heavy work in the powder magazine, which was the finishing stage for the cartridges which were produced in Hasag.

For a certain time, I didn't work as several dozen boils appeared suddenly and I couldn't walk at all. After the War, a doctor explained to me that this illness was probably the result of a bad metabolism. And perhaps it was due to the dirty conditions within which we lived. After all, there was no sewage system or running water in the apartments into which we'd been herded. At that time, we still had a little money with which we could buy food, so that those boils weren't due to bad food.

The conditions under which we lived in the Small Ghetto were very difficult. Four families lived in one large room, each in a different corner, with a kitchenette with two hot-plates. We burned whatever we could in the kitchenette – boards which, little by little, we ripped up from the floor. After all, where could we have obtained wood or coal? What else could we have burned? Those, who went out to more distant places, brought back some piece of meat. You could buy some from them and cook it in the kitchenette. Food was served out

of the common kitchen in the ghetto. Wherever there is collective food, someone profits from it. That's the rule. So we didn't take food from there.

My sisters, my husband and I became ill in the ghetto. There was a hospital in the ghetto. My husband fell ill just before the liquidation of the Small Ghetto. He had a high temperature and I ran for the doctor to come and examine him. The doctor gave me a referral to the hospital. As I wasn't sure whether he'd been given a correct diagnosis, I ran off for a second doctor, who was also a friend. He was older than the other one who was of our generation. Time had passed before I took my husband to the second contagious diseases hospital, due to the fact that the first doctor had said that my husband had tonsillitis or influenza – I don't remember exactly. In any case, I went to the contagious diseases hospital on Jaskrowska Street. There were no free beds in the hospital. I began to create a bit of scene there. "How can that be!? Doesn't he have a referral?". How could I go to work tomorrow? How could I leave him at home alone when he's so sick?! A lack of a bed at the hospital actually saved my husband's life as, on the following day, the hospital was liquidated. The Germans came and shot all the patients in this small hospital, as they'd also done at the other one.

A friend from my schooldays was in the East somewhere with his wife. He came back suffering from tuberculosis. The Germans dragged him off to some work. We tried to rescue him, but to no avail. The Germans pulled him out of his apartment and shot him. They were constantly killing someone. Those murdered were buried in the Jewish cemetery.

All Jews who had any family in Palestine, now Israel, were ordered to register. People believed that this would make it easier for them to leave. And, on 20th March 1943, they ordered those who had registered to gather in the square. It was predominantly the intelligentsia. They took them all away and shot them at the Jewish cemetery. After the War, we erected one large monument there, comprised of four segments on which was written the names of all those who'd been murdered in that *akcja*.

After the War, Jews were also buried at the Kula Cemetery. Now there is nowhere since the Jewish cemetery has been closed. The deceased can not be buried there. In the beginning, under the Communists, they wanted to take the Jewish cemetery away from us, but somehow we managed to protect it. They didn't want to have it known that it was beside an expanding steel-mill, as they were afraid of a bad opinion from overseas – of being seen as anti-Semitic Poles. But the risk that they would take it away was a long story. They had many others places into which they could expand the steel-mill. They didn't have to use the Jewish cemetery.

During the liquidation of the Small Ghetto, they first drove all the men out into the square and took them to Hasag. Later, after all the women were led out and were standing in the square, they found a few children. One was a little girl called Wandzia. She probably would have survived the War hidden with her nanny or with her parents' housekeeper.

However, her parents missed her greatly. They considered that things were now calm enough for the nanny to bring them the child.

People, in the main, left the Small Ghetto, in order to go to work. We went to “Enro”. Others went to Hasag. Still others went somewhere else, while another small group worked within the ghetto itself, in the kitchen, in the office or at the hospital. And, going to work, they took their little daughter with them. The following day, the Germans packed all the children into a vehicle and drove them away to be shot. The children, including that little girl, screamed horribly. Her parents lived near us in the Small Ghetto. I saw when her parents brought the little girl. I heard as the children screamed, “Save us because they’ll kill us all! Save us!” All the women cried.

A Gestapo officer walked along the street carrying a pistol. He ordered us to turn around and face the wall of a building which still stands to this day. The Gestapo officer said that if anyone said anything or if he heard anyone crying, then he would shoot every tenth person. They shot all the children. That Gestapo officer liked blondes very much, especially plump ones. One used to come to his apartment to clean, but everyone knew that she was his mistress. Her name was Helenka and she would play the role of a “Queen Esther”. Sometimes, through her, it was possible to get something arranged, to save or help someone. When it was known that something was going to happen in the Small Ghetto, she would take in her cousin. There was a rivalry between the Gestapo and the military police. The Gestapo allowed them to remain at home, but then the military police came and shot both of them. They played these kinds of games between themselves.

The Germans suggested to one of our friends that if she left her child, then she could stay. The woman said, “No! I’ll go with my child.” And so they took her. Then they told another one, a doctor, that she could stay if she abandoned her child. She also didn’t want to leave her child and so they went together. Women and children were murdered. I remember, I remember everything. It’s just that I may not have it so precisely ordered in my mind.

During the time in the Hasag camp, the work was hard – twelve hours per day for two weeks running without change. On one of the nightshifts, a Pole came up to me and told me that on the side, opposite to the one through which we entered, lay a pile of gravestones, “They’re slabs from your graves, from your cemetery”. Someone else came and said, “Your name is there. Go and look”. I didn’t go. It was the gravestone from the grave of my husband’s sister, who had died as a child.

The buildings at No.12 and No.14 on the *Aleja* were on the border of the Big Ghetto. The Germans gathered all the Jewish craftsmen they needed in the big, beautiful Franke House at No.14 *Aleja*. They wore green armbands. It was a home for the craftsmen. There was a pathway between the backyards of No.12 and No.14 *Aleja* along which people escaped. One of our friends took advantage of that possibility and left the ghetto. A Catholic was waiting for him outside the ghetto, who then led him away and drove him out of the city.

After his marriage, he was hidden with the grandmother together with his sister and there survived the War.

A women's tailor lived in the craftsmen's house. The Germans even took him to Berlin. Another tailor, this one for men, even before the ghetto was established, said, "I have so much work". During a chance meeting with my father, for whom he had once made a suit, my father asked, "What's new, Mr Einhorn?". "Oh, I have so much work!". "Why do you have so much work?", asked my father. "So many people want new clothes now?". "What people? Not people, Germans!". After the War, Einhorn the tailor's son left for Sweden where he is a professor of medicine. The Einhorn family survived the War with their children. Craftsmen also lived in our camp in Hasag, maybe at No.3 Koloniczna Street, which was the residential part of the camp. I didn't see them, but I knew that they were together with those craftsmen whom the Germans most needed. The Einhorn family survived there. They referred to Einhorn as a sculptor due to the fact that he sewed so beautifully. One of my younger friends, who had graduated from our high school, later leaned to sew. She had talent as a seamstress. Hence, the German women protected her there because she sewed for them. It was said that she was some sort of machinist but, in truth, but she actually sewed for all the *meisters*.

In Hasag, I was beaten because I could not carry six grates to the stoves. That beating left me with a festering wound on my head. The Germans considered it the norm for one woman to be able to carry six grates. It was too heavy for us, so we carried four grates and, for that, we were beaten. The men performed other work, while we had to do the carrying.

Amongst us, there were all sorts of women. For example, two girls had been professional prostitutes before the War. These were very good girls. When one of them was stuffed into the basement for some transgression, we cried for her. All character traits manifested themselves in the camp. There were those who helped each other and there were also those who took advantage of this terrible situation. There were also resourceful people to whom potatoes were brought from the city. They grated these potatoes and baked large potato cakes, which they cut up into pieces and sold around the barracks.

Others had access to sheetmetal and used it to make cans and *pyśki*. The cans were used to take food from the pots. Of course, one urinated in the *pyśki*. They stood under the bunks so that you didn't have to leave the section in the cold of winter. The barracks in which we lived, most probably, had once stood elsewhere. They'd been dismantled, brought over and then re-assembled. It was apparent that they were already quite old. The bunks, upon which we slept, were three-level. The worst was at the very bottom, near the basement. I slept on the middle one. One had to somehow manage to get up into the bunk, and there was another bunk even higher up

The vermin tormented us terribly. In my life, I had never seen and I hope that I will never again see so many lice and bedbugs. They ate away at us. We noticed that the bedbugs, whenever possible, crawled along the ceiling and dropped down. They climbed from all

directions and ate at us. I became convinced at the time that the peasant saying was correct – that vermin like one person more and another one less. They would really come at you from the other end of the bunk. Whatever lice and bedbugs there were would climb onto me. Adults could deal with it somehow. They tried to bring in anti-tetanus ointment from the city. They didn't provide that in the camp hospital. I had tetanus and scabies, which is a horrible skin condition. I suffer from allergies and I was scratched all over from the insect bites.

Once a week, we had a shower, all of us at the same time. Since I was scratched all over, the other women thought that I had scabies even when I didn't, and they didn't want to shower with me. Amongst us was a small girl whose whole body was covered in scabies. She never complained to anyone who had more of that ointment to give her some of it. The ointment helped to fight the illness – it reduced the scabies until it disappeared. Unfortunately, they shot the sick little girl.

Apart from hunger, people suffered from tuberculosis. Within the camp, there was a barracks set aside for those suffering from contagious diseases. First, there was typhus in the camp which thinned out the camp numbers. Later, they put people suffering from tuberculosis into the barracks. Most often, they died there. I also suffered from a lung ailment, but I recovered. In the infections barracks, they cut a loaf of bread like, today, you'd slice a cake - into triangular pieces. You would get such a slice of bread daily and dishwater twice a day. For dinner, they cooked soup from kale. Of course, it was very bland. Sometimes, they used bones and when something resembling meat was floating, we'd say that we'd eaten a loaf of bread with sirloin or pork and cabbage. When I left the camp, I weighed 43 kg. The three plagues of the camp were the vermin, the hunger and the uncertainty about the future.

Couples in the camp could meet up somewhere and talk. While he was working in Hasag, my husband burnt his finger. They ordered him to cut something with a burner. Of course, he didn't know how to do this properly and so he burnt himself to the bone. In order to meet him, I had to go behind some of the machines. They still remained there. The Germans didn't utilise the entire space which, before the War, had been a textile factory. They moved all the machines to that property which I now administer, because it was the closest, and then they established a factory here. Everything still hadn't been removed, so I hid there with him and washed him all over because, with that burnt finger, he couldn't wash himself.

Later, at another time, my husband came to the barracks. We were already in the barracks then. He had to wash my head, because I had to hold the bandage in place over the stitches following the beating. I had terrible lice and they got into the stitched up wound and he washed out the lice for me. Apparently when you dream about lice, it means money. But I don't dream about lice anymore. Apparently, all that has now passed. There were lice, bedbugs, fleas, - whatever you wanted. We simply knew when they were nesting on you and

from whence they started their wanderings. Scabies began on the chest and lice began behind the ears. They were headlice. Clothing lice developed in the folds of underwear.

The bedbugs were everywhere. Huge, stuffed bedbugs fell everywhere. Those lice eggs, namely nits, got in everywhere. Many months later, they were still there. My husband had already got a job and bought himself a used motorbike. We were riding on that motorbike and, when my head got covered in dust, lice clambered out again. I probably held a record for the number that I had. No one had as many as I had. Even today, when I think about, it still gnaws at me.

Every now and then they received an order and a certain number of people had to be delivered. In the ghetto, the Jewish authority was called the *Judenrat*. But, here in the camp, I don't remember anymore. But there were two or three like that, and they were told to pick an appropriate number of people for transport. I think they were being transported to Majdanek – that was the name that was being repeated. We didn't know exactly what it was, but we did know that one didn't return from there. So they would pick those who they knew still had a little money. These people would bribe their way out of it. They transported those who couldn't come up with a bribe.

There were those who cut and distributed the bread. They also had it better, because they could always cut a little extra for themselves. The portions didn't have to be cut precisely, did they? Always, someone gained and someone lost. Once, they came from the city and sprayed the inside of the barracks with some liquid, apparently an insecticide. At any rate, it didn't help. It didn't do any good. And then someone came, a friend of my husband's, from a Polish company in Częstochowa which made these sprays. He brought a cake of soap from the horrible *Endek* (National Democrat) with whom my husband shared a house before the War. He brought socks for my husband and some dress for me. We sold it all in order to buy bread which the Poles brought from the city. There were those amongst us who had money.

After that, I worked with the cartridges. One component in the production process of these cartridges were the raw cartridge-casings, which were dipped into drums containing some soap-suds. Those drums were moved around so that the soap-suds solution would clean the casings. That soap was "*trofiejne*". It was brought in from somewhere, supposedly Russia as it was embossed with Russian lettering. They were so-called, soft-soap cubes.

Using a small, low pushcart, one of the inmates, who slept in the same barracks as my husband, brought the soap from the storehouse into the hall where the casings were being washed in this solution. Along the way, whenever he could, he would steal a couple of cubes and, in some way, gave them to his wife. His wife worked with me in the powder magazine. The powder magazine was locked up tightly. It was out of the question for someone, other than those who worked there, to enter it. And she sold that soap to Poles who came to work from the city. The man who stole the soap also sold it. He gave some to my husband. My husband sold that soap to a guard acquaintance, who was of a higher rank and was not

searched when he left by the *wasche* (the guards at the Hasag gates). And thanks to that, we could sometimes buy extra bread from those who brought it from the city.

Unfortunately, two Polish women, to whom that woman had sold soap, were searched and the soap was discovered. Upon being severely beaten, they said that they'd bought the soap from a certain Jewish woman. "Where?". "In the *Labore!*". The *Labore* was so-called after "Labore", being the Latin word for "work" – and work was everywhere.

I remember that I sat in front of my machine – it was called an inspection machine, a *kontrolka* in Polish vernacular. It was automatic. They were nice machines which had come from Skarżysko-Kamienna. They monitored the length and weight of these cartridges and checked if the casings were well-tightened. The large machines which tightened the cartridge-casings were called *wirgomaszyny*. Then they went through the inspection and were packed.

Those two Polish women just happened to be working in the packing room. They came in with the Germans and were supposed to point out from whom they'd taken the soap. They pointed at who'd given them the soap. The Germans led the Jewish woman away. Apparently, she told them that she'd found the soap somewhere or other amongst ruins. Of course, they didn't believe her and it seems that they sent her to Ravensbrück. Someone saw her being led out, beaten and black. But she survived Ravensbrück and returned, even though she was already in Germany and could have moved on elsewhere from there, as people generally did. She returned to find her husband, but he was gone. The Germans had murdered him.

In Hasag, we worked 12-hour shifts. Apart from us, *meisters* worked with us, checking on us. They had to be given a certain number of free hours between changes from night-shift to day-shift. For example, there was this German *meister*. After the War, when the UB (Security Service) had arrested my husband, he found himself in gaol together with that *meister*, who cleaned everyone's shoes in the prison. My husband said to him at the time, "My wife recalls that you weren't the worst one at all". He was very glad. He died in the Zawodzie prison in Częstochowa.

If you finished a nightshift, for example, it wasn't possible to go to work the following morning. You had to have the whole of Sunday off and only start working day shift on the Monday. So it was all about avoiding free hours and free days. You worked non-stop for two weeks, twelve hours a shift. They let you leave the work area to the toilet – half an hour for a meal – they brought some dishwater – and you could eat that inside this powder magazine. At the door to the powder magazine stood, it was said, a Latvian. Those Latvians were hideous, having enlisted to collaborate with the Germans. That Latvian groped all the women in a vulgar manner, as they left, under the pretext that he was checking for hidden bullets. He simply pretended that he was looking for bullets, but it was all about humiliation. I don't know if he even got any pleasure out of it. Often, he would plant bullets inside our pockets, if

they happened to be open. Later, those of us on whom bullets were found, were either imprisoned or killed.

Because, in truth, there was some way that bullets leaked out to the partisans. The Poles got them out somehow. Later, the Germans ordered us to sew up all our pockets. We wore oilskin aprons. I had nothing else on. Everything was already torn, so I wore two oilskin aprons. I tried to get a second oilskin apron. I wore one on the front and one at the back, because my dress was torn.

It was probably the first day after liberation. I was walking along Kilińska Street with a friend from Kraków, who had also worked in Hasag on Jasnogórska Street. By the gate to the building where I'd lived before the War, two boys jumped out. They were also from Kraków and they said, "Come, Mirka, because we've caught this German who worked with you in the *Labore*. Come and check out if this is the one who planted the bullets on you". She went and confirmed that it was him who had planted the bullets and, in the backyard, they shot him. He was nasty individual - he deserved it.

Also, infamous in the story of the camp was a Jewish doctor called Szperling. He operated on a pretty, young girl, who was suffering from complicated appendicitis. This girl should already have been operated on earlier. They frightened her off by telling her that she had a some sort of abnormality and that the operation would be complicated. The operation was quite long by the time he sewed her up. Someone ran over and said that commissars were coming. The doctor opened her belly up again and stood next to her in a pose such that the Germans would see just how courageously he was working and operating. The girl died.

One of our fellow-prisoners, a young boy who slept on the top bunk above my husband, was operated on. I don't remember what he was suffering from – whether he'd cut himself or been wounded while working. That surgeon operated on him and didn't want to keep him in the hospital. The boy lay on the top bunk in the barracks and was incontinent. Whenever they could, his friends left work and came to help him. They were young boys who, generally, had no idea how to help him – and he died.

He also didn't want to keep me in the hospital after he'd stitched up the right side of my jaw. He generally behaved horribly.

A parcel arrived for the prisoners from some charitable organisation in the United States. We found out about it later. There were those who already knew about it earlier. Items from the parcel were openly sold in the city. That surgeon sold everything that was meant to be for us, that was to help us – medicines also. As soon as the Russians came, he enlisted in the Soviet Army straight away. After the War, some young boys looked for him for a long time – he'd left Częstochowa immediately with his wife. They caught him, told him how horribly he'd behaved in the camp and shot him. His wife tried to shield him. They said to her, "We've got nothing against you except that you'll be able to identify us". And they shot her too.

Administrators and tradesmen, who could be useful to the Germans, were placed into one barracks. There were mainly barbers amongst the tradesmen. Every day, or every second day, they had to shave all the men. Everyone had to be shaved. Of course, no one had their own razor, so they had to go to the barbers. The tradesmen could stay with their wives. In that barracks, there were different types of bunks, not those in the form of long shelves along the length of the entire barracks. They were double-level single bunks.

Before they had set up the barracks, we all slept in one hall. We called it the upper hall. The stairs leading to this hall were external. The whole night, one of the women shouted, "Murderer of women and children!". I don't know where she got the breath and strength from – she yelled the whole night, until reveille. A young boy sounded the reveille. That was one night that remains engraved into my memory.

There was a second night. A press had fallen on the sensitive ends of the fingers of one of the women. She was in terrible pain. No one gave her any painkillers and, throughout the night, she was screaming from the pain. She screamed for her child. She knew that she wouldn't see him again. A fourth young girl screamed too. She was an orderly in the small hospital. One of us had been pregnant and they hadn't delivered her in time.

One such person was my friend Genia. Just before the War, her husband had left for Palestine, today Israel, to check out whether it would be possible to emigrate there. After all, the conditions were different there. Both had been in the Jewish high school. After her husband left, she'd been left alone. Later, she told me, "Only a stone should be left on its own". And so she simply fell pregnant to some young boy, the young brother of my much younger friend, so that he was at least ten years younger than her. And so she was pregnant. As best she could, she tried to cover up with a loose coat but, of course, when there's a pregnancy, there has to be a delivery. And so a child was born in the camp hospital. Szperling could have put down the child in the same way that you'd put down sick dogs, but he forced a girl, an orderly, to drown Genia's child. She was to hold the infant by the legs and plunge his head into a bucket of water. The girl didn't want to do it. He told her, "If you don't do it, I'll call a German. He'll take you away and shoot you". And so she did it and screamed about it the whole night. None of us blamed her. We were ready to scream with her. Can you imagine taking an infant in a blanket by the legs and drowning it in a bucket of water - for a Jewish woman to have to do it because it was a Jewish child? After all, the Germans took the children away or smashed their heads against poles.

My friend, who died later in Israel, saw this in Drohobycz. After all, she knew that mother and child, that small crying child even today, I still can't... After the War, Genia, whose infant had been drowned, left for Israel. Her husband came for her and, in Israel, she gave birth to another, I think, two children.

Those who were in the two camps were those who remained after the deportation operations, namely about five thousand. There were very few people in Raków. A friend of mine escaped from Raków. A Catholic nurse, somewhere there, met him and led him out

somehow and hid him in a wardrobe. They married after the War and had a daughter. He died later. I think she is in Warsaw and the daughter is in Paris. She sings beautifully, a lovely girl.

A Catholic woman fell in love with a distant cousin of my father's, a lawyer. She decided to rescue him. She lived in her own house. She brought him home and they removed everything from the kitchen stove – those big ones like they used to have with white tiles. There was supposed to be a compartment in the stove as there were always four hotplates. He went into that section – they took everything out and he sat there. Of course, someone denounced her and she was called to the Gestapo. He worked out that, if she'd been summoned to the Gestapo, then they would come and do a search in her absence. So he got into the stove, placed the hotplates over his head and they didn't find him.

As a result of the War, I have a steadfast belief in destiny – and that that's all that counts in the strangest of situations. All the disabled were pulled out of the columns and were liquidated at once. One of our acquaintances, my cousin's cousin, terribly hunchbacked and a lawyer, survived. They took him once. He was already sitting in a bunker to be liquidated. They took him out of there and he survived. Another one was lame and he survived. Somehow, he passed through all the selections and he survived. After the War, he was caught looting in Dolny Śląsk and the Russians shot him. And the hunchbacked lawyer left – he lost his wife. He remarried a woman who had lost her husband in the camp, and had two beautiful children. One son is in the United States the daughter is in Israel and they immigrated to Denmark. He died there and she is still in Denmark.

In the camp, a family survived the War with a small child, Dadusz. The husband came to her and said, "The Commisar is coming! Hide him! Hide him!" He yelled and beat her, "Hide him! Hide him well! They covered him with a lice-infested straw-mattress. He lay there quiet as a mouse. When we returned from work after our shift, he came out and said, "Today, the saltmines, only water". He didn't know what a toy was. He didn't know what other children looked like, but what interested him was "Today, the saltmines, only water". After the War, they left for Israel with him.

While we were still in the ghetto, we went out and a man came up to my husband, He said that he knew him by sight, had heard about him from other workers and that everyone had praised him highly. That meeting was near the Warta River. He said, "I go home this way. You see that little dot in the distance? That's my little home. When you know that things are getting really bad, come to me. I'll hide you. I don't want anything in return". After that, when they killed my sister and brother-in-law during the intelligentsia *akcja*, we went to his home. My youngest sister didn't want to go and she stayed in the ghetto. But later, one by one, we went out of the ghetto and left for Warsaw, to *Wawer*. When they'd already taken everything away from us in *Wawer*, we returned.

The man who took everything away from us was called Leopold Mazurkiewicz. I'd recognise him anywhere because he had a damaged finger. He took everything from us, money, belongings. I said, to him "Please give the coat back to my husband! If you don't give

it back, we'll just lie down here on the tracks and let the first train that comes kill us! I'm not going anywhere without my husband's coat!" And he gave back the coat.

There was this acquaintance of my husband's brother-in-law's brother. I can't remember now what his name was. He was in the *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne* (National Armed Forces – underground), however he was decent. He was an exception. In 1943, he gave us receipts that indicated that we had paid money for *kennkarten*. During the War, a *kennkarte* was an identification card. Of course they didn't give them to Jews. They only gave them to Poles.

We travelled by train from Warsaw to Częstochowa. What else could we have done after they'd taken everything from us? My sister stayed a while longer with her brother-in-law. It was Holy Week. We had left on the Monday when the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was just beginning. After all, we had no idea that anything was going on there. On the train, we heard, "They deserve it! Maybe they'll strangle them. Maybe they'll burn them. Maybe they'll murder them". Then those bitches said, "Those Jewish women are throwing their own children out over the balconies. Only a Jewish woman could throw a child out through the window". They only threw them out when everything around them was burning. And we just had to put on a brave face.

After a certain time, an older lady got on the train. As we were still young, she came up to us. We were possibly still at the Warsaw train station. She says, "Could I travel together with you? I'm alone and I feel somewhat uncomfortable". If only she knew whom she was asking for help, she would certainly have kept away. We said, "Yes, of course!" It suited us to be together with such an older Aryan lady. And together we entered the compartment.

Earlier at the station, my husband saw this man from Poznań. Poznań people were narrow-minded. They were predominantly anti-Semites, *Endecy* (National Democrats). He'd even worked with my husband during the occupation. He looked at my husband and turned his head away. He pretended that he hadn't seen him. Look at it from a totally objective point of view. It wasn't malicious. It was good that he pretended not to see my husband. It was a very noble act on his part.

We got onto the train with the older lady. In truth, people were pleased that the ghetto was burning, but they were scared. It was Holy Week so people were carrying ham, alcohol, moonshine for sale and for themselves for the holidays.

At one point, somewhere near Koluszki, somebody came and said, "The Germans are coming! They're looking for someone!". And all those women began to shove under the benches everything that they were carrying – vodka, ham, *pospółka* (pork roughly cut up). "Don't be afraid! They're not looking for vodka". Someone else came and said, "They're looking for Jews".

And we only had two receipts that we'd paid for *kennkarten*. A German entered together with a Pole, who was doing the interpreting, "*Ausweiss kennkarten!*" (Identity papers!). So I gave him that receipt. "*Das ist keine ausweiss!*" (That's not an identity card!)

I pretended to be offended. “I don’t have anything else! In Wawer, they hang a notice up in the church with the names of those who should report to obtain a *kennkarte*. I’ve paid the money. I was at the church yesterday and there was no notice displayed.” He also took the receipt from my husband and also rejected it. We were certain that they would take us out. They asked no one else to show them their cases – only us. He looked through everything and then left. It was fate. After all, he could have dragged us out of there.

We had almost arrived in Częstochowa when we stopped at a railway signal point. It was raised, signalling that there was no entry. I said, “You know, we could get off and go from here to my uncle and aunt’s home”. You see, we were pretending to come here from Warsaw to be with my uncle and aunt for the holidays. My husband says, “No, I’m not going to walk through the fields. We’ll go through the station normally”. I thought to myself that someone might recognise us at the station

We got off at the station. All those Poles who’d got out before to take a short-cut and had with them prohibited items – the moonshine or that pork – were caught by the black-uniformed, German railway guards. They caught them all, while we go out at the station normally and calmly walked, at a leisurely pace, to those people with whom we had stayed before.

By that time, they’d taken in other Jews who’d paid them money, They’d used the money to pay for a proper floor, where before there had been only a dirt floor. A fat butcher with two girls and her brother were there now. The brother wore a *yarmulke*. I don’t remember if he had sidelocks, but he wore a *yarmulke*. The house had a kind of wood partition behind which they kept a supply of hay or something because they had a cow. That Jewish family had paid the farmer and they had created a hidingplace.

One day, the Jew, who was in hiding, came down the ladder to bring us some soup. We still had my parents’ silver cutlery. We’d left them to be used by the farmers in return for feeding us. We all sat and ate the soup. We normally did this in the morning.

Suddenly, along the path leading straight to the barn, because we were in the barn, we saw a man in a hat. My husband recognised him from a distance. They’d grown up together in the same house. He says, “Kozłowski’s coming”. He came in. There was no talk of us being able to get back up in time. There was a chaff-cutter there and some kind of fence. We still managed to jump behind the hay fence. Kozłowski comes in and, straight away, speaks very informally. “What are you doing here?”. “I’m eating soup”. What was he supposed to say - that he was up to something? So he looks behind that fence and recognises my husband and says, “Fredek, what are you doing here?”. And he pulls my husband out. And when these Jews realised that he was an acquaintance of my husband’s, that he was a friend, they say, “Mr Proskurowki, here is some money. Give it to him so that he’ll leave us in peace”. My husband says, “Listen, Władek, here’s some money. Don’t tell anyone that you saw us here”. “No, I can’t take that from you. After the War, you could say that I, a Pole, took money from you in a situation like this!”. “Take it, take it”. But he didn’t – he left.

He rode off for some distance on a bicycle. Then he returned and said, "You know what? Give me that money". He took the money and then went to the farmers and said to them, "Listen! Aren't you scared to be hiding Jews here? After all, they'll murder you some night!"

Just in case, the Jewish family, those four people, two adults and two small girls, left. They left because they'd already prepared yet another bunker which could be entered through a pigsty containing a pig. It was a little further away, on the outskirts of Częstochowa, in Wyczerpy-Aniołów. Later, the Germans found them there and killed them.

And we remained alive. It was June and the rye still hadn't been cut. The farmers, with whom we were staying, brought us food. The farmer went to work at "Enro", where my husband had worked before the War and where Kozłowski now worked. Except for the Germans, Kozłowski told all the workers, "The Proskurowski's are hiding at the Siwek's. They're both there". No one betrayed us. But Siwek came one day, after his shift had finished, and said, "Listen! I came first to you. I don't want my wife to know, because women get scared. She'll be worried about our children. You're going to have to go back to the rye fields or go somewhere, because everyone at the factory knows about you. Kozłowski told them all".

There was a kind of footbridge over the river, on the bank of the Warta River. Two partisans killed two Germans there. They were looking for those partisans everywhere and so, on the following day, we had to return. During the night, through a window, we entered the glue factory where my husband had previously been the manager. There were rats there as big as dogs. After all, they'd been feeding on the remnants, the waste and on the raw leather. And, under cover of night there, we returned to the camp. We went from the Small Ghetto to the camp. The ghetto was liquidated on the 20th June. We had returned to the ghetto after a couple of days around the middle of June. I remember that I managed to get hold of a newspaper, rather a piece of a newspaper, which contained the Katyn list. In it, I found the name of my husband's friend.

At that time, we had no false papers. They weren't needed. We were being liquidated. There was no longer any need for papers. Being caught with them meant death. We only had them while we were travelling. The papers, which we had, were not under the names which appeared on the receipts for the *kennkarten*, so that we'd have had to dispense with them anyway. So we said that we'd given ours away because we'd paid for *kennkarten* and we had the receipts to prove it. And we no longer had those other papers. Later, everyone knew who we were anyway.

All the Germans had a bad reputation, apart from Litt, who was the chief director. There was one nasty *meister*. I can't remember his name. At night, when someone fell asleep at the machines, and hunger made you sleepy, they would be taken to the guardroom where he ordered that the first person be shaved bald, the second with a cross, the third would have half his head shaved and the fourth, a quarter. And that administration director, his name

began with a “B” (Bretschneider), came, saw that the women had been so horribly shaven and began looking for who had ordered it. “You shaved yourselves like that?”. “No, Herr Meister ordered it”. And so, in front of all those Jewish prisoners, he argued with him that this was not a circus, it was a work camp where everyone had to work seriously for the Reich and for victory. So there was no sense in turning people into such clowns. The one, with whom he’d argued in front of everyone, took his own life. He shot himself.

There were various such interesting moments. In the camp, I met a girl who came from some small, Jewish town. She was 16 and, when they brought her to the camp, it was the first time that she had ever travelled on a train. She was from the outskirts of somewhere. For the first time in her life, she had travelled by train. She said something to me about eaves for not mixing the kosher pots with the non-kosher pots or mixing the meat pots with the milk ones. I listened like I was hearing about *Iron Wolf* (a character in *Pan Tadeusz*). I ask her about this and that, about one thing and another and she says, “Aren’t you Jewish?!”. “I am!”. “But not a real one”. “A real one - one hundred per cent – on both sides”. “So why don’t you know about this?”. “Because no one taught me”. “So what did your mother do?”. “There were no eaves and no kosher meals and we only ate pork”. “And at your grandmother’s?”. Later, after I’d told her everything, she says, “You know what? At least tell me that you’re from a mixed marriage!”. “No, I’m not. Both my parents were Jewish”.

It was a great mixture of people. A woman came on the transport from the Łódź ghetto. She said that she was German, 100% Aryan. She had a Jewish husband and, due to him, she had ended up in the Łódź ghetto from Berlin – I don’t remember anymore, in what manner. She went to the Germans to declare that she was a German. They said to her, “You are a hundred times more worthy of death than all the Jews. You went to bed with a Jew. You didn’t leave him.” She survived.

With us, wherever they could, they would pick off the children. But when they brought the Jews from Skarżysko-Kamienna, there were a few children amongst them. They let them keep the children, even though there was this exceptional sadist. They let the children stay. Nothing was predictable.

There were also some humorous moments in the camp. A girl slept below me – blonde, married. But in the camp, she had found someone else for herself and would slip away somewhere to go to him. She spoke shocking Polish.

There was water in the camp in which we were not allowed to wash the tins from which we ate our food. It was water from some pool which had been dug. But there was also mains water and it was turned on during the breaks when we were given food when we were on, for example, the night shift. It was mains water – it was clean. The girl and I had both finished the night shift. She leans over the bunk and asks this, “*Pani Proskirowska, czy Pani do bykacji, do ślaufu, umyć pyśke?*”. They were probably the only humorous moments. She survived and left the camp for Australia with the other person. Another example – Jews attempting to speak Polish.

There were also these women, respectable women. One was even a good friend of my mother's. Both these lawyer's wives slept opposite me and, sometimes, quarrelled terribly. One would move the other's straw-mattress, so other one does something back in return. One says to the other, "After all, your husband went out with me first!". "Yeah, but he left you for me!". They carried on that type of conversation. The whole barracks would gather together to listen to it. There was no cinema, theatre or television. It was all very depressing so that when someone was arguing, you could get a little enjoyment out of it.

The camp was liberated on 17th January. Some of the Poles didn't come to work, so we knew that something was going on. We could only guess as to what was happening. We heard the sound of shots in the distance. The camp was where "Wełnopol" is, on the extension of Wolności Avenue – 1 Maja Street. The Russians were coming from the direction of Warszawska Street. From the morning, the Germans had been terribly nervous. They were furious.

In the morning, I was supposed to go to my "Labour", to work, but I'd just finished the night shift. At that time, my husband always worked only day shifts. Once, a German engineer accosted him. He saw him in some passage. "Listen", he said in German. "You look like someone who understands technical drawings. What sort of education have you had?" My husband says, "I studied at the polytechnic, but didn't graduate". "OK, so you'll work there". And my husband was well enough regarded by his *meister*.

Someone came from the barracks square and told my husband that they had been removed, in order to be transported. In the meantime, having finished the night shift, I was on the camp grounds even though I should have been sleeping. As always, I was constantly afraid but, at that time, I somehow plucked up enough courage and scampered out of there. I got into a barracks (not my own, even) and got under this lice-ridden, dirty, bedbug-ridden, straw mattress and lay there quiet as a mouse. Someone came from the factory, I don't know under what circumstances, and said to my husband, "Your wife has been removed in order to be transported". My husband went to his *meister* and asked him to get me out of there. He was furious. He beat and kicked him terribly as, after all, he already knew that he would have to run away.

Someone told me, "Listen, get out from under that bunk. Those of you hiding under the straw-mattresses can come out now. The Germans are running away!". I was sitting there under that straw-mattress. When I got out from under it, I could see that people were leaving their work and were returning to the barracks in a long column. All of them were coming, but my husband was not there. He came right at the very end. I said, "Why has everyone come out already ...?". "I didn't think I had anything to return to. I thought that they'd already transported you!".

At night, they distributed whatever bread remained. Through the fence, we could see how they were all running away with their crates and bundles. They ordered that wooden crates be made for them earlier.

We were still in the camp. Earlier, one of the Germans said that whoever wanted to run away could run away with him. And there were those Jews who left with him and got out to the West. Some of them reached my friend's camp. It was Ravensbrück. She caught tuberculosis there and died. They had transported the men to Mauthausen.

People began crossing the Stradomka River which flowed next to the camp. They crossed the river somewhere. However I said that it was dark, cold and wet, and if we were to go across the water, we might even drown.

We went up to the gate. A crowd of people, who did not come from Częstochowa, came with us. They said that they'd stay with us, as they didn't know Częstochowa and didn't know where they should go. And so we went up to the gate. My husband began to bang on the gate and said, "Open up!". Polish guards sat by the gate. They were afraid that the Germans would come back and that they would be held responsible for releasing the Jews. We kept hammering on the gate and the guards let us out.

Upon leaving, we saw that there were fires on all around us. The sky was red. You could hear shots. There was a fire here, there was a fire there. There was not a living soul to be seen and so we set off. And we covered a reasonable distance - from 1 Maja Street, along the whole length of Wolności Avenue until we reached its junction with the *Aleja* - namely, the main road.

A group of uniformed Germans come up to us and they ask, "Who are you?". At the head of our group walked those who spoke German, among them my husband. They say, "We're Jews from the camp". "And you've all escaped?". "No, they let us out. They told us to go". "And do you all want to stay and wait for the Russians, or do you want to come with us?". "No. Only with you! Only with you!". It was as though we loved them so much that we would only want to go with them. So they say, "Very well, so follow us. Do you know where the Black Madonna is? (*Wo ist die Schwarze Madonna?*)". They thought that we didn't know where Jasna Góra was. It was all about heading west. Jasna Góra was in the west of Częstochowa. And they headed off quickly and we followed slowly, ever more slowly, ever more slowly, and ever more slowly until we managed to lose them.

We wanted to go to a friend of my husband's, but the gate was shut there because they were all sitting in the basement. We went into some other building. When morning broke, the residents of these homes saw that our clothes had painted stripes. They had painted stripes on our coats and on everything with oil paint. We told the residents that suitcases were lying along the road. They had been left there by those who were running away. They checked to see if the Germans had run away. They kept us there for half a day in order to gather up the suitcases.

Then we left. We went to the house at 28 Kilińska Street. The Germans had thrown us out of there. We wanted to occupy some empty apartment. There were German greatcoats there. We put them on because we were cold. In the morning, the Russians came and ordered

that everything be given back to them – they were to be their “trophyies”. It seemed a little out of order. To me, it resembled something from the camp, something from an earlier period.

We occupied a room together with the girl who had recognised the Latvian. There was a couple in the other room. People, who had hidden themselves somewhere, began coming to us. We were all very happy to see each other. We asked about those who were still missing – the majority were still missing. Together with the man from the couple who lived with us, my husband created a hospital in one of the residences. They brought in camp beds – kind of metal ones – so that we’d have somewhere to sleep. We had nothing.

My husband met his ex-landlord. His brother now had the house. He said that there was a vacant apartment there. Due to the fact that this used to be a German area, all the apartments had become vacant and so we took over one of them. We simply occupied the apartment. My husband met some other acquaintance who worked in the housing office. He gave us the allocation. Later he met someone who brought us the first spoons, or the first pillow. One time, he met someone who lived in the same building as did the (*treuhänder*), for whom he’d worked in the beginning. Those Germans had fled, but the housekeeper had stayed. They had looted so much, that the housekeeper gave us our first duvet and pillow.

After that, I began looking for my sisters. I found out from one person that one was dead, but the other one was still alive. However, my cousin found her name on a Polish Red Cross list in Kraków – she was dead. And so then it was possible to emigrate. We should have emigrated. My husband fell foul of the Party and they began to harass him. They arrested him once. They arrested him twice. We lost everything that we had. They wouldn’t let us work. There was no way that we could leave. My husband got a job with the co-operative and we both worked..

My husband was very capable. He began to arrange work where he’d previously been employed. But they came to take it away from him. He gave it back once, then a second time. After that, they came because my husband had organised a work co-operative, and they needed to give the position of chairman in that co-operative to some party hack. And my husband said, “That’s criminal!”. So they shut him up. After all, they had taken away half our apartment. We should have left the country then. I don’t know which would have been better – here or there. The climate in Israel is difficult. It’s not worth talking about.

Life went on after that – we worked, we got sick. My husband was admitted eight times into various hospitals, not to mention the sanitoriums. There was always something, always something. After that he contracted diabetes. He had that diabetes for almost thirty years. It damaged his body so badly that, when he suffered lung cancer, he couldn’t fight it. Amongst older people, lung cancer is long-term. It progresses slowly – you can live with it, but not when your body has been damaged by diabetes.

My parents and sisters perished during the War. They all perished. I have no one - absolutely. A cousin survived a German prisoner-of-war camp for officers. They moved prisoners in those camps from place to place. As he told me, there were those prisoners who

didn't want to sleep in the same room as Jews, with their colleagues, Jews, with whom they had fought on the front. And so they moved them.

After leaving that camp, he met his current wife. He had first married some Jewish woman who'd been transported out of Yugoslavia. They later divorced and he met his current wife. She's actually no longer his current wife – she died. She had escaped from the ghetto and took part in the Warsaw Uprising, reaching the rank of officer. Those women, members of the Home Army who were officers, were deported somewhere separately and imprisoned. She met her school-friend there who said, “By what right are you in this camp for Home Army prisoners? You're a Jew, after all!”. She ran off to their commanding officer who told her, “It makes no difference – Jew, non-Jew. We're all officers of the Home Army and we all fought in the Uprising”. But, prudently, she escaped somewhere and later met my cousin. They married and left for the United States.

That cousin graduated from high school in 1939. In 1939, he was ordered to flee Warsaw. Some colonel called upon the men to escape to the East away from the Germans. He also left. He reached Lwów where he met a cousin and her daughter. Her husband had been mobilised as a doctor, an officer in the reserve. He was a former member of the Polish Military Organisation, a former legionnaire and he was in their care. He then fled, across the Carpathian Mountains, to Budapest where he was under the care of a cousin who was the commandant of a hospital. He fled from there also because he absolutely wanted to fight. He crossed southern Europe until he reached the Polish Army which was fighting in France with the French army along the Maginot Line. After the fall of France, they were all interned in Switzerland. He graduated in chemistry there – it was a camp for those who wanted to study. He came back with tuberculosis and a diploma.

He went into the forest with some friend and they worked out that the Swiss didn't collect the saffron milkcap mushrooms because they didn't know that they were edible. So they began to fry and pickle them. They showed various restaurants that they were edible and so earned a little money. He even managed to send food parcels to his parents here. But, later, they deported his parents. He returned and, even though he could have left for the United States, he got married here and stayed. His wife died in January this year. He also died, leaving a daughter.

His father's sister was in Berlin. She lived in Berlin as she had married a German Jew. They had a so-called *kwota emigracyjna*. They were included within the final quota for emigration to the United States. Due to the number predicted for emigration, Joint (or some other Jewish charitable organisation) hired a horrible fishing boat which took weeks and weeks to sail across to the United States. I don't know if they left Berlin via the Spanish coast or the French coast, but they sailed for weeks. And they were fed some rotten fish and everyone fell ill. They were in Cuba, in quarantine. They reached the United States and there they died. I have no other family.

From my mother's family, only one cousin survived. He was baptised as a child. He kept his own name during the War because it was possible for him to do so. Now, he's in London. He has a whole English family. His surname was Zając. It's a very good surname, but he anglicised it. They want me to come over for Christmas, rather than stay here on my own. I still need to decide whether to go.

My husband had an uncle, his father's youngest brother who, as a young man, met some Catholic woman who was a lot older than him. She persuaded him to get baptised and he married her. He did that and, under his own surname of Proskurowski, lived either in Zduńska Wola or in Pabianice. He had one daughter with that woman. When the War broke out, that daughter, married by that time, ended up alone. Her husband, with whom she had four children, felt within himself the call of his German blood, said that he was a *Volksdeutscher* and would not remain with a half-blood Jewish woman – and he left her.

The women drove their husband and father away. He came to Częstochowa, as he knew that he had a brother here. The entire family publicly disowned him, but secretly helped him. But the ghetto had already been established here and there was no point in searching for his several brothers. The Pauline monks took him in.

He took up door-to-door selling. He came to one doctor who lived, possibly, on Siedem Kamienic Street. He wanted to sell him some small combs or shoe-polish or something. That doctor said to him, "You know what? I'm not going to buy anything today, but come back tomorrow". Being quite pleased with that, he returned the next day. The Germans were waiting for him and he was shot at the gate.

After the War, a woman with a little girl came to us. At that time, we didn't know who they were. "I'm your cousin", she says to my husband. "My father perished here". I thought that she had come to get some documents or papers that she needed. But she simply thought that, as Jews, we would have loads of money. At that time, all we had was a bed and a bedbug-infested divan-bed. We had nothing with which to help her. So I said, "Do you want some documents showing that they killed your father here?" "No", she said. "Which way can one walk to Pabianice?". "I've never walked to Pabianice. I don't know the way". So we eked out a little help for her and sent her home. After a certain time, she appeared again. Apparently, she died later.

Over the last few years, my husband worked near Jasna Góra, at Siedem Kamienic Street. He was the manager of a board games design office. He invented various board games and had a few graphic artists who worked on these projects. At first, the office belonged to the "Udziałowa" co-operative and later to a co-operative in Gliwice. When he began work on Siedem Kamienic Street, an elderly Pauline monk came to him and said, "I've learned, I don't know from where, that a Mr. Proskurowski works here". "I'm Proskurowski". He tells my husband the story of his uncle. They'd apparently told him that they would feed him and warned him not to wander around the city. But he didn't listen to them and the Germans shot him. Straight after the War, those Pauline monks accused the doctor of betraying someone,

whom the Germans had shot at the gate to Siedem Kamienic Street. I don't know if the NKVD was already here or whether it was to the UB. He received a life sentence in prison. They took him from Częstochowa to some other prison. Someone gave that doctor some poison and he killed himself on the train.

Is there anti-Semitism in Poland? It's 1996. Two years ago, in 1994, there was a waiter in Złoty Potok who didn't want to serve us. Do you need more evidence?!

We were at a hotel there and there was a restaurant. We went down for lunch, but they said that they had nothing that my husband could eat. I said, "You know what? If they have nothing (my husband was on a diet related to his diabetes) – there is nothing cooked, no chicken, You can't constantly eat fried trout or pork. We'll go down to the village – there's an eatery there". But it was worse there. But the time we left there, we knew that something was afoot, but we didn't know what.

We were sitting and waiting for a friend to come in our Fiat Bambino to pick us up. An older waiter, who also worked there, came up to my husband and said, "Your name is Proskurowski and you come from Częstochowa. I know you by sight". After all, it's not such a big city, especially in the city-centre where people know each other. My husband had worked in many places.

He said, "Whoever told you that there was nothing was lying. They have everything in that kitchen. You shouldn't have sat down there". We simply didn't know. I didn't want to wander all around the room and I had sat down in a place nearest the entrance. He had said, "I've got to get the Jews out of here! I'm not going to serve Jews!". It was 1994. It's now 1996 - how could something like that happen? It's just too much! After all, it probably speaks for itself. Still, today, wherever you go, there is this in the Jewish style or that in the Jewish style. After all, when there was that pogrom in Kielce, something started here in Częstochowa too. It was already uneasy.

In November 1945, I went to Łódź with my husband. My husband was already working and he had bought an old army surplus car – a piece of old junk. We were travelling to Łódź because the headquarters of the glue factory where my husband worked was in Łódź. My husband was the manager of the glue factory in Częstochowa. He had some business to do at the headquarters, so I went with him. A boy who didn't have a driver's licence travelled with us. My husband actually took him in order to glue rubber together. At that time, it was out of the question to buy any rubber for the car. So one carried glue, patches, rubber for the tyres. Everything was fixed along the way. An older man, who once had worked for my father, also travelled with us.

Along the way, we had an accident. I was the worst injured. Our car had broken down. A lorry towed us by a rope and we dropped into a ditch. My pelvis was crushed into pieces. For ten weeks, I was suspended by these straps. Even so, I couldn't walk properly for a long time. We weren't living in this apartment. We were on the ground floor in the stairwell on the other side. A married couple was living with us. When they found out that something had

happened, even though they knew that I was immobile, that I was at home alone with two dogs, that my husband had gone away on business, they took off and left me on my own. I thought, “What am I going to do?”

They told me, “Listen, it’s unsettled here. Something like what happened in Kielce could happen here”. I could neither walk properly, nor could I do anything. Still, I was scared that something might happen in the city - that my husband, not knowing what was happening, would get off the train and be caught up in it due to someone recognising him. At that time, he was due to return from Łódź or Warsaw. Leaving one dog at home, I took the other dog with me and went to far-off Krótka Street. A school-friend of my husband’s, or a friend from his youth, lived there and was a policeman during the War. My husband had given him a job. They still didn’t have a decent apartment. I went to ask him to go to the station and collect my husband from the train and not to bring him home, but to take him to his own home. I said that I’d have to manage somehow on my own, that I didn’t want him to walk across town, because it was unsettled. My husband returned home the following day. The situation was unsettled.

I went on a 24-day trip to Austria and Italy. In the hotel in Rome, I found out that there was a tour group from Israel there. In the *kibbutzim*, I think that they have a guaranteed overseas trip once every two years. They were certainly Jews from the Diaspora – they were older, shorter people. There was a boy amongst them. He was certainly on his own. He was a tall, handsome boy. I wanted very much to meet him. I realised that, if anyone started to talk with them, they would be watched by those small-minded Philistines with whom I was travelling. I sat quiet as a mouse. I thought to myself, after all I’m travelling by coach. What if they push me out and leave me in a strange place?! What year was that? I don’t remember exactly, maybe 1971 or 1972. And they said, “They’d all come back, those Yids, they’d all come back. If only they were allowed to, then they’d all come back”. And I said, “Are you sure? You know, I’m not so sure”. But I thought to myself, why am I playing these games?

At that time, I was taking English classes and met a grandmother. In order for me to travel with someone I knew and so as to not share a room with a stranger, I persuaded her to come on this trip. And she chatted away about the many grudges that she held against all the Jews of the world. After the trip, I said to her, “You know what? You’ve got all these grudges against the Jews. Guess what, I’m a Jew. Have I bitten you on the nose while you slept? (a little rudely) Have I done you any harm? I persuaded you to come on this trip. You’d have lived your whole life and never thought of coming on a trip to Italy”.

Now, she’s my bosom friend, at least she pretends to be. I pretend many things also. On the trip, I thought to myself, “How can I manage to get to these Jews?” There were two lifts. The woman, with whom I shared a room, went off to town looking for medication for her mother. I went down in the hotel lift. Then I got into the second lift and went upstairs. I did this so no one would see that I was just going one floor below, that I was going to that room. So I went down, then up again and went straight to those Jews.

And they talked with me. There was this young woman with them. She was much younger than the rest. There was an older couple. One of them worked in the post office of some kibbutz. Another woman survived various camps in which she was so severely beaten, that she was deaf and dumb – quite a young woman. At that time, there was still no talk of giving anyone anything for being a veteran. And she'd already got some fixed allowance from Germany. I asked them for a souvenir saying, "Give me something that I can take to my husband. He'll be pleased that it's come from Israel". They gave me a box of matches.

At first, after the War, I didn't work because, for two years, we ran an iron foundry. My husband looked after the technical side and someone had to run everything else. I had to do the bookkeeping and the workers' time-cards. I had to do everything. And then they hit us with back-taxes because, at that time, when they wanted to harm someone, they hit them with back-taxes. First, an official came and said that property tax hadn't been paid on the site. I said, "But, I'm not the only one. I only have a small share". Both those, who were the buyers from my father's partners and their heirs, they have the majority. And I put them on to them. No, they came and took my clock. I said, "You'll bring it back to me, carrying it by your teeth". Someone said that they were saying in the Treasury Department, "We'll go anywhere except to that loud-mouthed hag! She's terribly loud-mouthed and I'm not going to go there". After that, he came and said, "Madam, after all, I'm just carrying out my duties, it's my profession. You wouldn't be acting like this if it was your husband who had to do it". I said, "My husband??! He wouldn't be doing that nor would he be the dog-catcher". In the end, they hit us with back-taxes and we had to shut everything down.

After that, my husband established an electro-ceramic co-operative, and I worked there. Then I fell ill and I stopped working. But they came in connection with the back-taxes. They wanted to take everything that they could. At that time, we had a very, vicious dog. So I said, "I should warn you not to come in". He had to. I said, "Alright, but I'm warning you. I want you to sign a statement that if the dog catches you and bites a chunk out of your backside so that you can't sit down, that it won't be my fault because I warned you that the dog is vicious!" He didn't come in and they hit us with the back-tax.

They spread the back-tax over instalments and I wrote to the "*Szpilki*" magazine that their wishes for me were better than mine for them, that they hoped for me to live until the year 2000 so that I could still continue paying those instalments. For their sake, I hope I don't live that long. For that letter, they sent me 150zł, which was a lot of money at that time. I kept that issue of "*Szpilki*", but later I lost it.

Then they called me into the Treasury Department. I entered the room, everyone was seated. They opened a thick file. I'm guessing that this was the file containing everything that referred to me. I saw the issue of "*Szpilki*" in the file. I said, "Well, I've profited by 150zł because of you. You've profited so much from me. You'll see no more from me. You wish me better than I wish you, that's what I wrote". So, they amortised the rest. There's a saying

that if you let someone shit on your head, then they should at least give you toilet paper also. It's better not to let anyone shit on your head.

Before we divided up the apartment, conditions here were terrible. One day, they came and took everyone, who had anything, to Żarek. It's a kind of holiday town in the forest. The houses there had no heating. They wanted to take us there too. They took away our room. It was 1949, maybe. Later, I fell terribly ill. I suffered from nephritis and kidney disease. I didn't work for some time. Later, I began working from home and I worked that way until I retired. After that, there was no good work and I tried to get a disability pension. I was acknowledged as group three but they counted it as part of my pension. I had to save for years in order to retire, but it was never enough. So I brought a friend, who was with me in the camp, who attested to that fact. An official then said. "Perhaps she really was in the camp. But did she work there?!" I said, "How could I be in the camp and not work?! Did I survive my making moonshine? No? So tell me how – through moonshine or prostitution?" His mother was there and didn't work. I said, "So, she was lucky. I worked. What do you want to know? Did I work for the Germans or if I worked at all?! I worked, but Hitler forgot to give me a certificate stating that he'd made social security payments for me. You have to acknowledge all those years and that's that". I didn't pay anything. I didn't pay anything to anyone and they gave me a pension. Earlier they came and checked because I wasn't allowed to earn more than 1,000 zł. My pension worked out to be quite small. So I went back to the administration building, which I mentioned before. I now have a widow's pension and I'm still working. I'll work as long as I can. In my situation, work is therapeutic.

I've probably now related everything that I remember. I'll probably remember something else tonight or in the morning. It's the same with the different names and surnames which I can't remember and then remember later. Oh yes, I know who lived in that barracks, Different *kapos* lived there. There were better *kapos* and worse *kapos*. The word *kapo* is unfortunately now in the dictionary.

I don't have a younger generation. If I had, then I wouldn't be here. Those who had children, left together with them. I had these close friends. He was in the Party and he was obsessed by it. He was the father of a young daughter and she said to me, "If the Party is more important to my father than his only child, then let him stay here. I'm leaving for Israel." But they all left together. All those, who had children, left. I was a necessity. After all, one had to ensure a better life for those children than they had here.

There were those difficult times when my husband was very sick, the most difficult moments or when the funeral needed to be arranged, In a normal family, when someone dies, the whole family is there. But I was on my own, so people helped me. The Orthodox priest sold me a plot in the cemetery. He earlier sold to a friend of our's, a doctor - a plot for himself and a symbolic plot for his parents. He persuaded us to buy sites also. We ordered that it be constructed and a headstone be put up with names, with everything – just no dates of birth. Right to the end, I didn't want it – not in the obituary or on anything else. What

business is it of anyone else's how old he was? There was only the date of death. I respect that priest very much. I hold him in high esteem. As a matter of fact, it didn't just depend on him, but also on the Orthodox parish council that we were sold the plot. Otherwise, where else could we be buried?! They would have given us some horrible plot somewhere in Kula cemetery. We would have had to be buried in a Catholic cemetery. Here, we have prepared, neat places, near the pathway. There are two gravesites there. It would be a sin for me to say that there are not a few decent people around. But the majority are

There was a terrible fuss when one of the Israeli Prime Ministers, I can't remember which one, said that Poles get their anti-Semitism from their mother's milk. Which one said that? Two Prime Ministers ago, perhaps. He created a huge fuss. So I also said, "It's not possible for it to be obtained from mother's milk". "Do you think so?". "Yes, because a child is taken off the breast so early, that it's not possible to have got it from mother's milk. A child generally drinks milk from the bottle and cows are such decent animals, so that they could never be such small-minded Philistines". Now, there are few who can out-talk me, so that I got out of it somehow.

When I travel to Israel, I feel great mentally until I see those horrible *Chassidim*. It's the first city of the modern era, I think built by the first pioneers. When dusk falls, someone blows a trumpet or rings a bell, I can't remember now. This is a special signal for people to close their shops and stop working – totally medieval. There are taxi companies there that don't operate on Saturdays. Buses don't run there on Saturdays, but in Haifa they run all the time. Haifa is another world. But the buses don't run in (?). They stop running in the afternoon and only start again in the evening of the following day. You have to walk if you need to go somewhere.

We met a man there who grew up near Częstochowa. He spoke Polish, possibly writes Polish and is a cousin of Archbishop Lustiger from Paris. He was called Lustiger, the same as the other one before he was made a French bishop. And he was as religious as the other one – only from the other side. He won't use the lift in the hospital on a Saturday, because he'd have to press a button. Apart from that, the lift will probably get tired too. To me, it's medieval – it no good that way.

Future generations should build Israel. I'm proud of them. My whole heart is there. You only the bare minimum to survive. I told my friends and acquaintances that I placed a small bag of earth from Israel near my husband's head in the coffin. "Why did you put the bag in there? After all, he was born here and lived here" I replied, "We might have buried him in this earth but, near his head, he has earth from Israel". I suppose that if I die in Israel, then I would want earth from here because I lived my life here and those closest to me are at rest here in the unburied, scattered ashes of Treblinka.

We'll see what happens next. I receive letters from this widower – a friend of my husband's. They were in Anders' army together. He's the one to whom the commandant said that he should go back to Israel. "Go! Go to your own kind and I won't consider you as a

deserter.” He didn’t return to Poland. “There will always be anti-semitism there and I feel sorry for you”. And he writes to me, still indignant, about how people could vote for anti-Semites, that no good will ever come of it. I don’t know. I’ve never considered myself sufficiently judicious. But when we were last in Israel, and there were elections there, all our friends wanted to vote for the leftists. There was one *Częstochowianka*, my sister’s friend, who had experienced so much, that she could write a thick book about it. Only she said that she would vote for the rightists because she’d had enough of the leftists.

My cousin’s husband was in the East. When war with the Germans broke out, they were taken away, evacuated – first the women and then the men. She left with a friend and their husbands left together. But someone warned them not to go to the Polish Army because they had Soviet passports. They sent them a letter, but it didn’t arrive in time. They reported to the Polish Army and they were packed off for ten years into a Soviet slave-labour camp for being counter-revolutionaries. When they returned, he said, “I’ve had enough of building socialism and of Slavic people. We’re going to Israel”. He took his wife and child – and they left.

I always have a feeling of embarrassment and psychological discomfort about the establishment of that country. It wasn’t through my work. And there is so much blood and sweat there. Has anyone anywhere else in the world thought of making the desert bloom, so that each little tree would have a source of water? Where else has something like that been seen or been heard of?

There was this series of films. It had a double name. This man had a Jewish wife. When he travelled to Israel, he stayed with our friends in Haifa. In one of the films, there were two scientists from the Polish Agricultural Academy who went there for training. One dealt with the raising of cattle. I don’t remember about the other one. It showed how the cows go out and stand by these automatic washing machines which wash their bellies and udders. After that, they go for milking. It’s certainly clean.

We were in a hospital there. Unfortunately, I saw a lot of Polish hospitals when my husband was a patient. What does a hospital look like? A friend of our’s was a policeman, When he retired, he volunteered once a week at a hospital in (?) and worked with X-rays. He had no training. All he had to do was simply apply stickers on paper and write on them what the doctor told him to. Thanks to his work, he’d freed up a nurse, right? She could be doing something else. By the time we were in Israel again, he was already very ill. He was in hospital. We went to visit him there. Different women wheeled in trolleys like on an aeroplane. They go to the bedsides and say something. I asked, “What were they saying?” - because I didn’t understand. “They’re asking if anyone who is sick needs help to go to the dining room”. There was a dining room on each floor, one or two. Some sat on the beds of those who were too weak to go and fed them. This was the accepted practice – it was normal.

There is this whole row here now about people who should help children across the road. You know what this is like in Israel? I observed it. At the closest corners to an

elementary school, stand children from the highest class of that school. They wear orange vests like those who work on the roads here do, and they have so-called lollipops – a big circle on a long pole. And when three or four children gather in order to cross the road, one child comes out and stops the cars. It's out of the question for a car not to obey. They all stop. One stands with the pole and the other leads the children. No one need to be paid for this. No one needs to be trained. Only one of those leading the children managed to get hit by a car.