



My Spiritual Journey

Volume 1

By Andrew Urbanowicz

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INTRODUCTION

“My Spiritual Journey” is a follow-up book to “God’s Leading in My Life,” which I published earlier. The two books need to be read side by side.

God’s Leading in My Life



By Andrew Urbanowicz

My Spiritual Journey



Volume I

By Andrew Urbanowicz

My first book “God’s Leading in My Life” is an overview of my life, without too much detail or too many personal stories. It concentrated on high points only. The book’s purpose was to be my testimony as a witnessing tool to unbelievers, and an encouragement to believers.

“My Spiritual Journey” is meant to fill those gaps, giving far more of my own personal reflections and details to the events that took place in my life. As such, I am going to follow similar chapters and high points in that story. I will try to avoid repetition, reiterating only that much, so as not to make the reader lose their orientation in where exactly they are in the story.

This book is meant for my close family only. The former was written with a much larger audience in mind, as a testimony of my walk with the Lord.

As my story unfolds, in these two books, it is my hope that my family will get to know me a little better and understand the passions that are part of my life. I hope that they get to know the rich historical background of my heritage, and the influences that shaped me into the person, I am today. I hope there are lessons to be learned and thoughts to ponder. I hope they will see God’s hands in the making of the tapestry of my life. I hope they will start seeing God’s hand in their own lives, learn from my experience, find courage and determination to stay on the right path.

“My Spiritual Journey” tells a personal story of my life, its struggles and the consequences of my decisions. Through it, I will share lessons I have learned, and bits of wisdom I acquired along the way.

In this book I will use four new types of inserts to share my thoughts with you

1. Family Background - to provide more information
2. Historical Background - to explain the origin of events
3. By the way - to share my personal thoughts with you
4. Spiritual Lesson - to reflect

Let me illustrate this for you.

1. Family Background

In my first book “God’s Leading in My Life” in Chapter 1 on page 8, I wrote “My grandfather did not exercise any authority in the house.” This statement begged for an answer. In the two years that my book has been in circulation, to my surprise, no one has asked for an explanation. Now I offer it. My grandfather had three vices, smoking, drinking and gambling. They caused him to lose the respect of his family.

2. Historical Background

From ages past, the weakest communities were attacked by stronger communities, to plunder, loot, demand tribute and to take slaves for forced labor. As a defense strategy, the weakest communities made alliances with each other, amalgamated to become a larger nation, and built walls around their communities. Travelling throughout Europe you will be amazed how many castles there are, which only testifies to the level of unrest that the region experienced in the past. There really were no good or bad nations, as there are no good and bad people. Rather, people become who they are as a result of the choices they make. Nations are as their leaders are.

3. By the way

Poland was no exception. On its western borders it had a stronger opponent in Germany - it was losing here. On the east border there were unorganized communities, and Poland made territorial gains. When Russia began its push westward, Poland suffered losses there too.

The concept of a European Union at least offers a solution to this cycle of conquests. Now, the question is how far do we go with this concept. Continental unions make sense. We need a balance between powers, not just one power. One global union would lead to dictatorship like we have never heard of before, and there would be no way to get rid of it. Human nature as it is, will eventually come to such an end. The Bible has a lot to say about the end times.

As you read my book you may come to believe that I am condemning Germany, Russia, Ukraine and other nations. Not so. Poland is not any better. What I am trying to say is that humanity in its totality is troubled. It is not my purpose to demonize any group of people. If anything it is a condemnation of us all. No nation, if you dig deeply enough, can claim total purity. All have committed hideous crimes in their past. The Allies dropped burning phosphorous on the German population in Dresden and bombed civilian targets. The U.S.A. dropped atomic bombs on two cities in Japan. Poland used terror in years past, and the list goes on and on. I am sure you could name many more examples yourself.

To illustrate this truth, at the height of its power, Poland practiced its own form of crucifixion. Victims would be laid on the ground with their legs spread apart. A team of horses would be attached to each leg and would pull the victim onto a sharply pointed pole. The pole would then be stood upright with the victim raised on its top. In other chapters I will relate acts of cruelty, committed by both sides, which I have heard from my colleagues or witnessed myself.

4. Spiritual lesson

From the Historical Background section one can see how much injustice and destruction exists among us. The question arises: why? The scriptures offer some insight.

Galatians 5:19-21 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the

kingdom of God.

Envy, jealousy, greed, lust, selfishness and pride fit into this category. They cause all that damage. It all starts within the heart.

So let us resume the story. To follow the pattern of my first book - let us start with the historical background to my ancestry and upbringing.

A word of caution

Because of my poor memory I never was strong when it came to remembering facts. In all my studies I always tried to understand trends, principles and general implications. Facts I soon forgot, but the lessons of these events stay with me. The same goes for history. I went through World War II, I witnessed the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and took part in the Warsaw Uprising. I shared my memories with others and discussed at length the implications of these events. However I did not read books about them or know too many details about these events. Others are much more informed on the actual facts. There are books written to which you should be looking for facts (I listed some books in my possession). What you can find in my story is an eye-witness account and my personal understanding of what took place. All I know is that these courses of action are bad, morally bankrupt are to be avoided at all cost. They leave consequences that take years, sometimes centuries to correct. Study the history of any nation and you will find many examples to prove this point.

Polish history is no different. It is a history of failures and missed opportunities. Failure to practice justice, righteousness, and love. In other words, to practice goodness, internally and externally, in the fear of God. The same goes for every nation I am aware of. As a result there are disastrous consequences, and Poland had its share of those.

Throughout the history of civilization, so many countries have had the opportunity to establish a just society, where minorities feel acceptance and willingly remain in submission to greater authority. There was Egypt, Israel, Babylon, Assyria, Greece, Rome, England, Germany, U.S.A., Russia, they all had a go at it and they all failed.

Smart, innovative people - instead of creating justice, peace, and stability, they ended up oppressing and exploiting others.

As I mentioned in my first book, Poland was being squeezed from two sides. From the west and from the east.

To the west, these territories (red), over centuries, were lost to Germany's relentless drive eastward. Germany had a determined policy to drive out all Poles, and replace the total Polish population with Germans. Indeed some Germans lived there for



centuries. None-theless you will still find many Polish names among Germans from these territories. Apparently some Poles remained there and became absorbed as Germans.

To the east, it was Poland that gained territories (green) from the non-ethnically Polish population. Later in history, Russia became a superpower and started expanding westward, which it continues to do to this very day. In recent years these populations (Lithuanian, Belorussian and Ukrainian) became independent. In fact, the situation there was similar to South Africa. Like the white population in South Africa, the Polish population in these territories was a ruling minority. By the year 1945 there were 5.5 million Poles living there, some had been for centuries. (In 1939 as Poles were escaping from the advancing German forces, the refugees who entered these territories, were shocked to find out that the local population did not speak Polish, in Poland!). There were large and prosperous estates owned by the Polish settlers there, served by the local population.

However drastic the measures to restore these territories to their rightful owners were, they corrected past injustices and stabilized this region. There was so much hatred in Europe at that time, that all I could think of was, “Everybody hates everybody else.” You could see this reality during the Second World War. There were mass killings, mass destruction, and brutality. Was it a reflection of human nature? Or was it a consequence of past injustice? It is for each one of us to decide. These thoughts had a big influence on my whole life outlook and contributed to making me who I am.

By the way

I am against political or traditional boundaries. I favour ethnic and cultural boundaries. In fact I am against multiculturalism and mixing ethnic groups. Let people live freely and carry on with their own practices as they choose, within a larger political commonwealth of ethnic groups.

What a loss it would be for countries like Poland, Germany, France, Italy and countless others, to lose their rich art, literature, history, culture and traditions. It is something else to learn a second language of a Commonwealth, then to lose one's native language. At one time everybody learned Latin. In Poland people learned French, and after 1939 everybody learned German, next Russian and now English. Who knows whether, in the future, it will be Chinese or Hindi? Empires rise and fall, but what endures – is a native culture and language. That is why a concept like the European Union, offers so much hope to stabilize this region.

As a result of the war, I developed a special sensitivity to injustice. Every day, I observe acts of crime and violence. I follow the news of wars, war crimes, torture, mass killings, dictatorships, oppression, fraud, extortion and cheating. Even ordinary citizens cheat on taxes and steal if they think they can get away with it. The rich are sheltered from justice by a myriad of questionable legal amendments so they can amass huge wealth at the expense of others. Given proper laws and law enforcement, I have come to believe that 25 percent of the population should be in jail. In fact I am disgusted with what is going on, to the point that I no longer even look for such injustice - but it is there.

Given my Christian background, when I first entered the business world, I was shocked to find how people interacted with each other. There was no love and respect, but infighting,

gossip and jealousy. I now realize that what I was looking for was heaven, and landed on earth. They are different. Later, when I became a manager, I found out opportunities that would benefit the organization, I would look for support from other managers. The first question they would inevitably ask is “What is in it for me?” Selfish concern.

The overriding concerns and passion throughout my life have been:

Freedom, Justice, Righteousness, Right and Wrong

From an early age I experienced abandonment, oppression, discrimination and enslavement. Therefore I have struggled with these issues for as long as I can remember. The only solution - I find is in the Bible, in Christ and in His righteousness.

It is just my conviction that we will never be able to eradicate wrongdoing. As some groups progress towards righteousness, others emerge, more wicked than those before them. Look what is happening when there is an absence of police presence - looting, vandalism, robbery, rape, murder, theft, etc. It only points to how shallow our righteousness really is. It is utopian thinking to imagine that this cycle of violence can ever be stopped without supernatural intervention.

Spiritual lesson - Depravity of man

What is it in the nature of man, that he can be so cruel to his fellow man?

The history of humanity is full of wars, slavery, cruelty, and brutality towards weaker groups. And yet, some individuals are capable of rising to lofty heights of sacrifice, compassion, love and altruism. They are a minority. The vast majority is capable of wallowing in the depths of depravity.

Genesis 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Will education be able to resolve this problem?

I am all for education. I pursued it all my life and strongly advocate it for everybody. I believe that every young person should advance as far as they can. Learn a profession or a trade. Delay any temptation for money or fun as long as you can. Apply yourself to study. Yet, I do not believe that education can change the basic human nature. It can work for some. But there are also some very smart and highly educated people engaged in fraud and crime.

There are more than seven billion people and every 20 years there is a new generation that needs to start learning from scratch. Not everyone wants to be educated. Education can only teach knowledge, but not wisdom. You can educate a fool, but what you get is an educated fool. There are other influences such as family upbringing, tradition and religion that often have greater power than education.

Wisdom foresees long-term consequences material, psychological, social, relational, spiritual and physical. There are some smart, brilliant, educated people who make a mess of their lives. Some make ingenious discoveries that wind up threatening the survival of the human race altogether.

The problem is not in the head, but in the heart. It is not rational but emotional and moral. As soon as you will a perfect, harmonious society, others more primitive, more ruthless, will wipe it out.

Will science and technology be able to resolve this problem?

I believe we should put as much money and effort as possible, to advance both. Technology can help the good and the bad. You can create a police state; surround yourselves with walls of protection. Whoever controls the technology has power, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. You end up with dictatorship, inequality, exploitation, and injustice. The more centralized is this power; the more difficult it is to dislodge.

Will religion be able to resolve this problem?

No! More evil was done in the name of religion than for any other cause. There is a form of dead, legalistic, traditional religion that leads to inquisition, suicide bombings, ethnic cleansing and a score of other ills. People become like the gods they worship. Your concept of God matters most, because you can worship God or Satan, depending how you define your “god”.

There are two spirits

That of God: *Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

That of Satan: *Galatians 5:19-21 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.*

Religions fall into these two categories.

It is said that Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship with God. But that very definition is strictly individualistic. What matters is the effect it has on you through this relationship. It is either

1. A total internal transformation and a passion for God, or
2. A dead-end, habitual ritual.

Only the first is able to address the sinfulness of man. This is the path I choose.

The second will only escalate the problem. I want nothing to do with this type of religion. To me, it is empty and meaningless. Without total transformation, it boils down to living a “good” life and being “good” – a godless attempt to do it on your own.

We criticize Islam, that where they are in the majority, they are intolerant toward other religions. Yet the same was true with the Roman Catholic Church at the height of its power. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

That is why the Biblical story sounds so true. It forecasts that the depravity of man will make things even worse. Things are not going to get better, they will get worse. What we see is the spiritual struggle between good and evil. This life is the way God selects His

own for another existence in heaven. We are passing through a big sieve, vast majority will get stuck in it, only a few will pass the test. We need not despair about injustice; rather we need to be comforted by the knowledge that God is in control, He knows what He is doing and we need to put our trust in Him.

Matthew 7:13 Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

Ephesians 3:10-11 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Is there a political solution?

The best political system is “Benevolent King”, but soon the Benevolent King dies and eventually “Ruthless Dictator” replaces him.

Communism is really a harmless, idealistic system, which never had a chance to be tried in practice. Right from the very beginning it was taken over by a ruthless dictator (Stalin). In other countries it was lead by dictators as well. Any political system in which a multiplicity of views is not tolerated, is doomed to fail.

Capitalism, with proper checks and balances, should work well. However the checks and balances soon erode and there is an out-of-control system dominated by the rich.

Socialism has a tendency to become a welfare state and so the list goes on.

There simply is not ideal system. Each has its merits. What we really need is to combine the best ideas of each, and create a system that works, fully expecting that there will be attempts made by some groups to corrupt the system to their own advantage.

The corruptive forces try to amass wealth and power in the hands of few. You end up with “nobles” and “slaves,” “rich” and “poor”. Once this corruptive process is accomplished, it takes revolution and bloodshed to dislodge it. The powerful will not give up their privileged status without a fight. After a time, the winners end up not being any better off than the losers, and the wheels of history spin round and round again. There is a period of some equality for a while, but it never lasts too long. No political and social solutions ever last.

Such corruptive forces are at work in all human affairs. Think about Christianity, the most profound teaching of Jesus based on love, humility and servanthood. How on earth could it produce burning of people at the stake, torture, inquisition and crusade wars?

On the right: A Vatican clergyman blessing the Italian Fascist Army on the way to commit war crimes in Ethiopia.



What about our legal system?

It is almost impossible to jail the rich or a top member of organized crime. There are by now so many loopholes, delays, appeals that it takes millions of dollars to convict anybody, but the very poor.

On the other hand God's law is infinitely simpler and just.

Genesis 9:6 Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed

Deuteronomy 19:21 Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Punishment administered by legal authority, must equal, but not exceed crime committed. No exceptions, no torture, no delays, no excuses. If you can prove it, that is all you need.

As the population departs from God, the resulting moral degeneration would cause countries that enforce the law to go bankrupt by the cost of prisons and the cost of convictions. During natural disasters, civil unrest, or war, prisons could be damaged and dangerous villains be set free. Without a death sentence crime cannot be eradicated.

Are we innocent though?

"Evil triumphs when good men do nothing." Evil prospers when we blindly obey orders. At some point there has to be your personal Alamo. You have to make a stand for your convictions, or you are simply a coward. Every one of us has the responsibility to stand for justice. Is it dangerous? Yes! But unless we are willing to risk our safety, even life – itself, we deserve to be slaves.

Have you noticed that it is always the young who are willing to fight for justice? Examine any revolution; it is the young who suffer most and make the biggest sacrifices. The older generation has too much to loose and is willing to put up with a lot more of oppression.

Unless we are willing to love our enemies, the cycle of violence will never stop. Here lies the power of the message of Christ!

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

As long as we believe there is no God, there is no absolute truth, there is no accountability, no life after death, we descended from animals and are animals – there is no end to brutality, selfishness, cruelty and deceit, a living hell on earth. This is the dominant view of the God-denying popular culture.

Compare this attitude with the teaching of the Bible and there is a totally different worldview. We are created in the image of God. We are able to ascend to a high moral standard, we are able to be selfless, just and righteous. We do not need to wallow in the depth of depravity. There is hope available now for all who believe in the atoning work of Jesus' death on the cross.

Following the popular culture is a slippery slope. You need to make a decision. Which

side are you on? On the side of righteousness or your selfish gain? Look at the consequences of your choice. Which one would you rather have? Consider carefully before choosing sides. You may still have a choice today, however once you deny God you may never be able to reverse your decision; you will end up in hell – in your conscience and as your ultimate destination.

If you choose righteousness, look into the Bible for your guidance.

You will be able to look into a mirror without shame.

You will have to make tough choices and deny yourself some tempting opportunities.

You may not accomplish as much as some of your friends will.

You will gain inner peace, confidence and eternal security.

If you choose selfish gains - follow the crowd.

You will find short-lived pleasures and gains.

Some may gain prosperity, fame, or power, others may do all right, yet others may end up in jail, in a variety of addictions or end up with broken lives.

You will be able to drown inner emptiness with activities, busyness, fun, music and the endless search for something missing in your life.

You will always be unfulfilled, never truly satisfied, often regretful or guilty

Neither of these choices will protect you from what afflicts all humanity - natural disasters, wars, violence, or sicknesses, although making the second choice may lead to some of these consequences.

When I was 16, I chose the first option. Throughout my life I have tried to follow this course, albeit unsuccessfully at times.

CHAPTER 1 - My early childhood

1927 - 1928 One year in Poznań, Poland

I was born in Poznań, on June 8, 1927. Both my parents came from central Poland (mother from Warsaw and father from Lublin) and they moved there for greater job opportunities. Father's sister-in-law (his brother Stanisław Urbanowicz's wife) owned a large apartment house in Poznań and Stanisław looked after this property. When I was born, he persuaded my father to move to Poznań and rent accommodation there. As I was born, they too had a son, Wojciech, so we two cousins knew each other in our infancy, although I never met him afterwards.

Father worked as a very successful salesman for a large pharmaceutical company. Mother worked at a Post Office. Father's family, however, had their own business and they persuaded father to open a new branch of it in partnership with his brothers.

Family Background

Father had three brothers Zygmunt, Bolesław, Stanisław and three sisters (Maria Brzosko, Felicja Mazurkiewicz, Zosia Krupowicz). Except for one brother (Bolesław), whom I met briefly in Lublin in 1939, I have neither met or even seen any pictures of any of the others.

The family searched for the best location to open the business and soon father made plans to move to Wilno to start a new branch. But my parent's marriage was already falling apart and my mother decided not to follow him there.

1928 - 1929 One year in Warsaw, Poland - with my grandparents

My mother moved back to live with her parents, taking my sister and me with her. My grandparents had an apartment on the third floor in a central area of Warsaw. I still have an address of this place (ul. Koszykowa 71 m 36). I have no recollection how big it was, but it had to have been crowded with all of us. There were our grandparents, my aunt (she was not married yet), mother and the two of us. There was also a live-in maid, making it five grownups and two children who lived there.

Mother went to work and a full time nanny looked after us, the children. She would take us for walks and be with us during the day. To the best of my knowledge we never played with other children.

1929 - 1930 One year in Wilno, Poland

After one year of separation my parents reunited in Wilno to give the marriage another try. In part, this attempt at reconciliation happened because father needed mother's help in his business. She took over all the bookkeeping and accounting; she had completed, I believe, two years of schooling in accounting and was very good at it, while father concentrated on sales. Father's business was vinegar and mustard, which he made and distributed

throughout the region.

By that time, I was two to three years old and I do have some memories of these times.

1. I remember a passage, lined up on both sides with huge barrels filled with vinegar. At the end of this corridor, opposite to a doorway was a desk where my mother did the accounting for father's business. I remember the strong smell of vinegar and the cold during the winter months.
2. I remember my parents having fights, angry words and me feeling very insecure and frightened.
3. I remember my father taking me once with him in a truck cabin on a business round to his clients. He left the engine running and left me alone in the truck. I remember crying, as I was afraid the truck would go on its own. Passersby would look in the window to see why I was crying, and leave. After what seemed like half-an-hour my father returned gave me a dirty look, end of story.
4. I remember playing with Jewish children, as next to our factory there was a Jewish school and I played with the children during recesses. When I got back to Warsaw, a year later, my grandparents were shocked that I had picked up some Yiddish.
5. I remember us taking a family photo in front of the factory, with us children standing on a horse wagon, next to a horse that I was afraid of. I still have this photograph - that is probably why I remember it.



The memorable photo



Me



Irka, me and mother



Father

By the way

In Poland the relationship between the Polish population and the Jews was somewhat strained. There were many reasons for this.

- The Jews would not assimilate; they lived in separate communities, dressed in traditional clothing, spoke Yiddish and would not intermarry (much like the Amish in Canada).
- They were not allowed to possess land, so they worked in trades and in money-lending, which would not make them many friends.
- They helped each other in business and trade and that gave them an economic advantage
- The same was happening with trade abroad, as the Jews helped each other across borders
- Poland remained for 150 years under foreign rule and the Jews were suspected of collaborating with oppressive powers.

No wonder that my family was not impressed with my Yiddish vocabulary.

Strangely enough I have no memories of my sister from this time of my life, although we are often pictured together in photographs. Photography at that time was strictly in the

hands of professional photographers, who used tripods, mailbox-sized cameras and huge ignited flashes in poor light conditions. All pictures were posed, people did not smile and naturally, all photos were in black and white. Photos taken years earlier were printed on thick (2-3 mm. card board). I have few of those.

1930 - 1933 Three years back in Warsaw, Poland - with my grandparents

When I was three years old (1930) my parents separated for good. (They would eventually divorce.) My mother took my sister and me and returned to Warsaw to live with her parents. My father never helped my mother financially, and he threatened her on the pretext that he wanted custody of me. In order to not get involved in a legal battle, my mother kept quiet and carried all expenses by herself.

For the next three years we lived in Warsaw, in my grandparents' apartment. As before, my mother went to work and a hired nanny looked after us children. (On the right – picture with a nanny). We were well looked after; we were loved and provided for. My grandmother was in charge.

In 1995 when I visited my aunt in Poland. she praised the nanny who looked after us. Apparently, she was a very intelligent and well-mannered lady whom we all liked a lot.

Aunt Halina was dating Witold, so he would be a frequent visitor. We also had many other guests.

I have more memories from that time.

1. I remember lying in bed each evening, listening to horse-drawn taxis before I fell asleep. The horses' hoofs echoed, as they approached, and then faded as they clip clopped out of range. It was a soothing sound that remains a vivid memory to this very day.
2. I remember my grandfather pulling me on a sled for a wintery walk
3. I remember being on our balcony, on the third floor, watching men who delivered coal, having a lunch on their horse-drawn wagon. They had rye bread and a piece of kielbasa in each hand. I remember running to my grandmother asking for the same, I got it, returned to the balcony and ate it, while watching the men from above.
4. I remember two students - relatives of my grandparents - visiting our apartment and sitting on a sofa amusing themselves by tickling my sister Irka. Hearing her calls for help, I got a broom out of a cupboard and charged at them to rescue her.
5. I remember Aunt Halina's church wedding, where Irka and I, dressed for the



Nanny, my sister, and me in a park



Witold and Halina

occasion, were part of the wedding ceremony.

6. I have photographs from that time that bring up other memories. My grandfather and mother both worked and we were mostly with grandmother, the nanny, and a maid. We were cared for, loved, and lacking nothing but the presence of our parents. My grandmother was not very affectionate, so I do not recall too many hugs or physical touches.
7. I remember grown ups talking and my mother saying, “Every child thinks their mother is the most beautiful woman in the world” to which I replied, “I don’t think so, I find many more beautiful women”. My mother was deeply disappointed. So much for honesty. I must have been about five at the time.
8. I remember being scared of the dark (because of all the horror stories I heard from our babysitters). I would curl up in bed, head under the covers, hearing a strange sound - the beating of my heart!
9. I remember once, after our family entertained guests, my sister collected wine from their glasses and we drank it. She would have been about six.

In the summer months my grandparents rented a cottage each year, in Świder near Warsaw, so that we children had fresh air and room to play outdoors. It was here that the incident with the crows happened, which I described in my first book (on page 7)



Playing dolls with my sister



I pretend to pump water



My sister, grandmother and I

I have some memories and some photographs to remind me of those times. One thing that I remember well is that I had to play with my sister, Irka a lot. What I resented most was playing with dolls. Irka had a friend, a little Jewish girl named Sarah. The three of us often played together. I don’t think there were any boys my age that I could have played with.



By the way - About the Polish names

My official Polish name is Andrzej (in English Andrew)

This is the name on my official documents, but in Poland people are rarely called by their official name. Rather, they use nicknames - or a more affectionate, often totally different name that somehow became associated with the person. I was called Jendrek or Jendruś. At that time there was a children’s book titled “Jendrek, pendrek z Honolulu” – sometimes, when teased, I was called

that.

My sister's official name was Irena (in English Irene)

She was called Renia, or as I called her, Irka (which was not as nice).

Another example is Aleksandra – we call her Ola

Andrew and Irene are not names of Slavic origin, they are the names of Roman Catholic saints.

Real Slavic names end with “slaw” such as Bolesław, Stanisław, etc.

What about my uncle's name, Witold? I was told it was Lithuanian in origin – a reminder of the 400-year union between our two countries.

What about a family name “Urbanowicz”?

Urban (like urban development) is of Latin origin meaning “a town dweller”

I was told “owicz” means “son of”. Thus Urbanowicz means “son of a town dweller”.

That rules out any claim on my part to nobility.

pole - means: flat land, like farmland

Pole – means: a dweller of a flat land, hence Poland

By the way – About the Polish language

While reading, you know exactly how to pronounce each word

(not like in English where many times you are guessing example: “closed” which phonetically should be spelled as “clouzd”).

In Polish alphabet there are no letters: x and v

Some sounds are denoted as: ś ć ą ę ż ź ó ł sz cz rz

Some sounds have two possible representations: u or ó and ż or rz

(This created for me enormous spelling problems. I never knew how to spell different words)



Aunt Halina was dating Witold, whose hobby was photography. Witold took most of our family pictures from then on. At that time photography was not popular, but he took and developed his own pictures. Later, in 1932, Witold married Halina and became an important part of our little family. He was also my role model of what a man should be like. At that time Aunt Halina moved out from her parents' apartment and the newlywed couple lived in Warsaw, ul. Emilji Plater 8 m 42

Other relatives would come to visit my grandparents. Among them was a relative of my grandfather, Lucek, an uncle of Mat Morawski. I never met Mat in Poland but I met him first in Italy, later in England and finally in Canada where we remained in touch with each other, from then on, until his death in 1999. During the war Lucek ended up in England. Later, I met him visiting Mat in Toronto, he looked the spitting image of my grandfather. It was like my grandfather had come back to life!



On the right – Lucek holds me on his knee

Something about my grandparents



1914 age 46

Both my grandparents came from nobility (in Polish “Szlachta”), from the now forgotten European Feudal system. Their parents had lost their estates, yet my grandparents still preserved their posture, manners, and attitude of the privileged class. In our home there was no bad language, arguments or rough manners, just the opposite, I was never shouted at; I was treated gently, yet firmly. Persuasion, not discipline, was the most effective tool at their disposal. However to encourage good behavior my grandparents had a deer leg, with hoof and fur, with four leather straps attached to it. My grandmother had it displayed in a visible location. On occasions, friendly persuasion did not work and occasionally I was recipient of fully deserved corporal punishment.

My grandfather was an honest, hard working and intelligent man. He was a manager of finance in the Polish Railways and as a side job he managed finances at the Warsaw horseracing track. Unfortunately my grandfather had three vices, and three women in his life that would constantly remind him of his shortcomings. His vices were smoking, drinking, and gambling. As a result my grandfather lost every penny of the family savings, so the family never managed to improve their standard of living. As a result grandfather had no authority in his home. My grandmother was the one who managed the family affairs and saved whatever she could.

Although my grandparents lived most of their lives in Warsaw, they moved to Grodzisk (Aleja Kolei, willa “Pałacyk”) to keep grandfather from gambling from 1907 - 1914. Unfortunately, this strategy did not work, all it did was make grandfather come really late from work. So they returned to Warsaw.

A story my aunt related to me, when I visited her in 1995, illustrates this point. My grandmother was saving for winter coats for her two daughters. She kept the money in a jar hidden in a kitchen cabinet. When the time came to buy the coats, the jar was empty. She asked grandfather “did you take the money?” his reply was “Yes, I lost it”. Grandfather never lied. That year the two girls had to wear the old coats. There was no credit buying in those days.

Another example of grandfather’s folly happened when I was about six years old. One afternoon grandfather took me with him to do some shopping. Somehow he got lured into a poker game. The men had a merry time, drinking, snacking and laughing. I just hung around totally bored and when night approached, I ended up sleeping on a wooden bench covered with grandfather’s heavy winter coat, inhaling secondhand cigarette smoke in a noisy atmosphere that reeked of alcohol. I missed my supper and I am not sure if I got anything to eat that day. When dawn approached, we walked home. Naturally grandmother was waiting for us. I went to bed, but the two of them had a big argument. I never learned how much grandfather lost, but I know he didn’t win. Grandfather managed to get into trouble frequently.

By the way

The house in Sulejówek was in grandmother's name, otherwise grandfather would gamble it away. Grandfather sometimes complained that he was just a gardener in his own home.



1909 age

My grandmother had a very hard life. Her father committed suicide leaving a wife and seven children. She was the oldest child. When her father committed suicide, she was just 17 years old and she assumed responsibility for looking after the family. She came from a very good family, her mother came from a German baron's family. Grandmother started working 12 hours per day dressmaking and doing embroidery on dresses. She was well paid and had very good working conditions but the family still lived poorly (one sibling died of tuberculosis). That life experience left her very hard and demanding. She did not express her feelings externally. She married late. My grandfather was six years

younger than she was, and she treated him more like a mother than a wife. She was very cold towards my grandfather, who in spite of his weakness was far more caring. In many ways it was a dysfunctional marriage. Neither of them were really happy.

During the World War I (WWI, from 1914 - 1918) grandfather was moved to a post in Russia to run the railways there, as many Russians were drafted to the army and there was a shortage of skilled managers. (Note, Poland was not yet free, and Warsaw was in the Russian zone of partition). The family was transported to Russia by train, in a cattle wagon, which they shared with another family. While Grandfather was shipped to the interior of Russia, grandmother, and her two daughters stayed in a city by the Black Sea. By 1915 they were already in Russia. Here my mother, who was 17 to 21 during WWI, must have experienced interruption in her studies and possibly an end to her dreams.

When I visited my aunt in 1995 she told me, how in Russia during the Bolshevik revolution, she remembered being out in town with my grandfather late at night, and seeing blood flowing in the gutters. He told her not to look at it, and they hurried home.

I loved my grandfather. He was kind and caring. He loved me too. We were the only two males in predominantly female family. He longed to have a son, as my grandparents lost their first two baby boys in their infancy. Grandfather or Dziadziuś, as we called him affectionately, was always there for us. My wish is to be like him to my own grandchildren.

One thing I must admire about my grandparents - their house was always open to their two daughters and to us their grandchildren. My mother and aunt moved in and out, and the home was always open to them. We two grandchildren were accepted and cared for too (My aunt never had any children). It was love in action, not so much expressed externally.

What characterized our little family were the loyalty and a deep sense of commitment to each other. They could be tough, but they never abandoned you. There were problems,

but they stuck together through every adversity. Years later, during the WW II that loyalty would be tested to its utmost, and prove to be real.

Historical background - the European Feudal System

The European feudal system was based on a class system (royalty, nobility, urban population and peasantry). In Poland the agricultural land was in the hands of the nobility, who owned large estates and the villages of peasants who worked the land. Peasants did not own any land. In fact, they served in slave like dependence on their masters. In case of war, each nobleman would lead a company of peasants under his command. (Of course, this type of system could only be maintained by the use of force). Eastern European peasants largely continued upon this path until the 18th and 19th centuries although there were numerous peasant revolts.

The emergence of capitalism began to reduce the importance of the landed aristocracy in Polish society. A considerable segment of the peasant class abandoned the overburdened land. Millions of Poles emigrated to North America and other destinations. Millions more migrated to cities to form the new industrial labor force leading to the collapse of the feudal system and the transfer of land to the peasantry (the estates were parceled into smaller, family farms). From then on, the aristocracy had to earn their own living.

My grandparents never really transitioned from nobility to the new reality. Class distinction was still very strong in their mind. As a result they stayed distant from their neighbors and lived a very secluded life, especially later, after my grandfather's retirement, when they moved away from their circle of close friends and relatives.

By the way

Today we are shocked to think that some citizens gained nobility status that lasted in their families for generations, while others lived in slave like dependence – also for generations. How did the nobles become nobles? Some by honorable achievements, acts of valor or bravery. Others by scheming and treachery. One might concede that such a status would be Okey for a life span, but not forever! God in his wisdom established a year of jubilee for the ancient Israelites. Every 50 years land was returned back to those who had lost it.

Yet the same situation happens today. But it is no longer nobility status, but riches that are at stake. What we need today to stop the massive accumulation of wealth by some, is to change the inheritance laws such that the bulk of the wealth gained by an individual, would return back to the public purse so others might work for it. Other measures that would help would be to penalize speculation and end the payment of enormous salaries. What we are witnessing is capitalism out of control.

Religion



Our family, Roman Catholic in name only, had no spiritual interest at all. To divorce, my mother briefly changed religion to Calvinism, only to revert back to Catholicism later. I don't remember anything bordering on spiritual at home. There was only secular thinking and an attitude of hostility to any religion. Later, in Sulejówek, I had some religion classes at school, and had to pass compulsory catechism test. I don't remember anything I learned, but I have a picture to prove I passed the test. (I am on the bottom row, second from left)

During my visit to Poland in 1995, my aunt related something I had never known; she was married before. Her first marriage did not last long. Her first husband was a Russian intellectual who was hiding from Russian secret police. When my aunt asked her mother for advice as to whether or not to marry, she was told "Do what you want, it is your life, don't bother me". She married him; he remained hiding in Yugoslavia, coming only occasionally to visit her. A year later he was assassinated, poisoned at a café. I don't think my mother got any parental advice either. My mother's marriage was a disaster from the start.

The problems in my parent's marriage stemmed from their upbringing, each of them coming from a different social class. My mother came from nobility. She was brought up in a highly cultural community. She was well mannered and self controlled, thoughtful and considerate. My father on the other hand came from the working class. He was an ordinary man, loud and simple. He could put a show and present himself more respectably, but his nature was to wear his emotions on his sleeve. The two of them were opposites. Opposites attract, but are hard to live with. Thoughtful parents will see it right away and sound the alarm - it is still up to the children to take advice of their parents.

Whatever happened they did marry.

Spiritual lesson - Marriage

The decision about whether to marry and whom to marry is an important one. My mother made a bad decision and got caught in it. That one mistake caused her a lifetime of trouble, and affected the lives of her children. Whatever we do, we must do it prayerfully and in obedience to God's word. Since my father was repeatedly unfaithful, I can only assume he had seduced her. If you play with fire you will get burned. Premarital relations need to be absolutely pure. You need to know the character of a person before you consider getting emotionally involved with them and eventually committing to marriage.

"Falling in love" is a myth - often based on a physical attraction and selfish in nature - "I want it, and I want it now". But think about that kind of a relationship from a distance. If it is pure it will last. If it is selfish it will break up and you have not missed much. Once you get caught in the turmoil of emotions it is too late. It will not be the type of a relationship that will last "for better or for worse"

Strangely enough I fell into a similar trap later on. Both my wife and I had completely different upbringings and our differences would cause us many troubles. Once again, our problems can be attributed to the fact that we each came from different social classes. I am not claiming to have been nobility, but I was raised that way. My wife's family background was completely different.

Today as we tend to think we no longer have social classes, but we do! They are consequences from the past that take generations to erase. They continue to cause many marriage failures. There is something to be said about genuine faith; culture, manners, and etiquette that are passed on, over several generations - these values get engraved into the personalities of the children.

By the way

We do not need nobility to preserve cultural, moral and behavioral values. Such values come from Christian sources. The nobility, in order to maintain their social advantage, limited educational opportunities for those outside their class. Practicing Christian posture, albeit only externally, they showed themselves superior to the populace. The church played its part in perpetuating that divide, by maintaining a superior, dogmatic attitude that alienated the lower classes. Clergy were generally seen as part of the nobility, and therefore mistrusted.

What we really need is to teach Christian values, humbly, lovingly and with servant like attitude. People reject our teaching when it comes with "father knows best" attitude. They are more likely to be receptive to the Christian message if they see it demonstrated in our lives.

It hurts me to see our young people being rude, loud, angry, disrespectful, selfish, or using profanity. They often come from environments where such behavior is normal. It is not social status, which is the cause, but not knowing Christ.

This lack of interest in faith is common in Poland, and has to do with the way Christianity was introduced and taught there.

Historical Background – Christianity and the Roman Catholic Church

In the middle ages, when a nation accepted Christianity, it was the king and nobles who converted first. Automatically the whole nation became instantly “Christian”. It took years to bring the message of Christ to all corners of the nation. There were shortages of missionaries and clergy who knew the native language. People were illiterate. Neither was the Bible yet translated to any languages other than Latin and Greek, which only the educated could read. As a result, in Poland, in remote villages, paganism was still alive when I was a child. There is also a form of religiosity, tradition, and customs without the full spirit of conversion. Also folklore, preserved over centuries, will continue spreading pagan ideas and confuse the Christian message. In my childhood I was exposed to paganism from the peasant maids we had at home.

Yet, the Roman Catholic Church is firmly established in Poland. Why? In all the years of persecution, the Catholic Church was a strong supporter of Polish ambitions of freedom. During the Communist years, people filled the churches to demonstrate their defiance of the oppressive regime. In the mind of the Polish people, patriotism and the Catholic Church are synonymous. Before WWII the Catholic Church exercised considerable power and political influence in Poland.

By the way

The Roman Catholic Church never promoted reading of the Bible, even when it was translated into the native language (I was in Catholic residential schools for six years and I never saw a Bible, other than the one on the altar, which was written in Latin). That is because in the words of a Roman Catholic theologian “The church does not derive her certainty about all revealed truth from holy Scripture alone **Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored**”. That is why when preaching, Catholic priests will say, “The Church teaches ...” as opposed to “The Bible teaches ...”. Many things that the church teaches are not from the Bible: Supremacy of the Pope, Church hierarchy, priesthood, liturgy, celibacy, Mary’s status, praying to saints, purgatory, confession, rules against artificial birth control, rules on fasting and the list goes on. Today in Canada, laymen are reading the Bible, but 70 years ago, in Poland, that was not the case.

Where does tradition come from?

From Judaism – from the earliest days of Church history there was pressure from Jewish converts to follow Jewish law and traditions

From Roman and Greek paganism, which entered the church when Roman Emperor Constantine in 392 AD made Christianity the only religion of the empire. At that time, many pagan priests and philosophers entered the Church. Just as the Roman Empire sought to dominate all nations; the same ambitions were passed on to the Church – they are not from the Bible.

By the way

Tradition is the surest way to spread error. The word of God never changes. You will find it in the original manuscripts written in Hebrew and Greek. Every generation is to go back there and examine it again in view of current knowledge. As this knowledge increases, the Holy Spirit will reveal to us understanding that escaped previous generations.

Constantine’s declaration making Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, was the worst thing that he could have done. Until then, for almost 400 years, Christianity had been a movement, a belief system. The Church was a community of followers of Jesus Christ wherever they were. It was a spiritual body with Christ being the head of His church. It had no hierarchical structure. The teaching was based on the Hebrew Scriptures, the Gospels and the Apostolic letters that compose today’s Bible and nothing else. The teachers were local pastors, elders and travelling missionaries.

- Acts 1:24-25* Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this **apostolic ministry**, which Judas left to go where he belongs."
- Acts 15:13* When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me.
19 "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. - James makes the final decision, not Peter
- Galatians 2:9* **James, Peter and John**, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right and of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.
- Galatians 2:11* When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong.

Peter never exercised singular authority in the Church, he shared it with James (brother of Jesus), the apostle John and Paul. They were all equals. Individual churches were not under central control.

Overnight Constantine changed Christianity into the State religion (thus the Roman Catholic religion of the Roman Empire was born). He merged together State and Church, giving the Church privileges of a Roman state department (just as the pagan religion had enjoyed before, offering lucrative positions to clergy; this in turn caused many now unemployed pagan priests to enter the Church)

Religion vs. Christianity

Religion - People join a church in the hope that doing so will have some magical power to get them to heaven. They hope to earn the right of salvation by earning "brownie points" with God. If the good deeds outweigh the bad deeds – they'll make it. (By the way: this concept does not come from the Bible, it comes from Islam). Subsequently, a religious person does things like going to church, praying, etc. As for moral conduct, for the majority, there is no substantial change in their lives. Some even believe that they can continue sinning as long as they go to confession. Among my religious friends some pick and choose what they are willing to believe, to the point that some deny the deity of Christ. This type of religiosity exists across all churches and denominations. What encourages religiosity is departure from Christ and Apostolic teaching.

Christianity – Salvation is a free gift to everyone. A gift is not yours until you open it and accept it as your own. Salvation is not something you have to work for.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no-one can boast.

So what must one do to open the free gift of God given to all, by the goodness of God?

Acts 16:30-31 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household.**"

You cannot make yourself believe on your own. All you can do is to recognize sin and emptiness in your life. You can search for an answer and seek God's help – He will do the rest! Once you believe, there is confession, repentance and a radical transformation in the believer's life – he/she is set free.

A true believer fully endorses Apostolic teaching (the New Testament) and has Christ as a model for his/her life. He/she does all the good deeds, like a religious person, but not to earn salvation, but to be like Christ, to express their gratitude and love for God. Their life is transformed, sin is fought against, there is a passion to share their faith with others. He/she belongs to a church, but not to be saved, rather to learn and grow in the knowledge of the Scriptures and to be in a community of believers, like themselves.

I am often accused by the Polish people that I changed my religion – I did not!

I left the Roman Catholic religion, but did not change to any other religion.

I left religion, but never intended to abandon Christ and His teaching. In the end though, without a

Bible – I lost my way.

I am not Roman Catholic, nor Protestant, nor Greek Orthodox Christian, nor did I change into a Christian cult such as Mormonism or Jehovah Witness. I am not a religious person. So who am I?

I am a Bible believing follower of Jesus Christ – a true believer.

I attend a church that teaches the Bible and nothing else. I will listen to any interpretation of the Scriptures, and make my own judgment as to its consistency with the Spirit of Christ.

State vs. Church

The State and the Church have two distinct and different roles, that must be kept apart.

The State protects the rights of every group in the community, maintains order and defends the nation.

Its primary focus is economic, legal, justice, employment and a list of other practical day-to-day businesses.

The Church evangelizes the world, preaches Christ, justice and peace. It represents only one group among others. Its primary focus is spiritual, moral and one of character building

By the Way

Roman Catholic Church – the official name has no mention of Christ or Christianity, it could be anything

Roman: means religion of the Roman Empire

Catholic: means universal, this exposes a fundamental error in the Roman Catholic Church.

Universal means supremacy of Christianity over the whole world, and the expectation that the Pope will rule supreme over all the governments. Such supremacy of the Pope lasted for a little while in Central Europe in Middle Ages. (They called it a “Golden Age.” We call it, “The dark Ages.”) Not until the return of Christ and the Millennium will Christ rule supreme.

To this end Latin was to be the common language of the world. (That is why the Roman Catholic Church resisted the use of local languages). The Vatican to this day is a State City, the future seat of a world government, and the Pope makes State visits seeking visibility and influence. That is why the Roman Catholic Church pursues so vigorously the ecumenical movement.

That is not what I read in the Scriptures. Just the opposite. The Church will always be in minority, often persecuted and resisted. In fact this is a characteristic of a true church of Jesus Christ. Only minorities are persecuted, not majorities.

2 Titus 3:12 *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

Matthew 7:13 *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.*

I am not condemning the Roman Catholic Church as such, but I am concerned about its departure from the Scriptures. We do agree on fundamentals of faith. Roman Catholics practice the same life style we do. I do not hesitate to visit their worship and have them as friends. I love and respect any true follower of Jesus Christ, as many of them are.



Places I lived in Poland

1. Poznań – where I was born
2. Warsaw – where my grandparents lived
3. Wilno – where my father lived
4. Ostrzeszów – where I attended residential school before the war
5. Lublin – where my father's family lived

1933 – 1937 Four years in Sulejówek, 2 Okrzei Street, Poland (Now ul. Zawiszy 9, Sulejówek 05 – 070)

When I was six years old my grandfather retired (on 1932 Feb 29) and in 1933 my grandparents bought a house 20 km. east of Warsaw. This made it harder on my mother to travel to work, west of Warsaw. It was a rundown house, but it had a large, although neglected garden. My grandparents had little money and I am sure my aunt helped them in many ways. From then on it was an endless succession of jobs and improvements that kept my grandfather busy all the time. Looking after the garden was heavy physical work. Using a watering can to water the garden by hand, weeding and gathering fruits and vegetables.



Grandfather and Aunt with a watering can.



Me pretending to shoot, behind the dog house



Me at a Mail Box



Irka, a maid and me



Left
Irka, mother and me.

Right
Me, mother and aunt





1934 Aunt, Grandmother, Mother, Irka and I



Grandmother washing vegetables by the well



Me picking cherries



Me picking berries

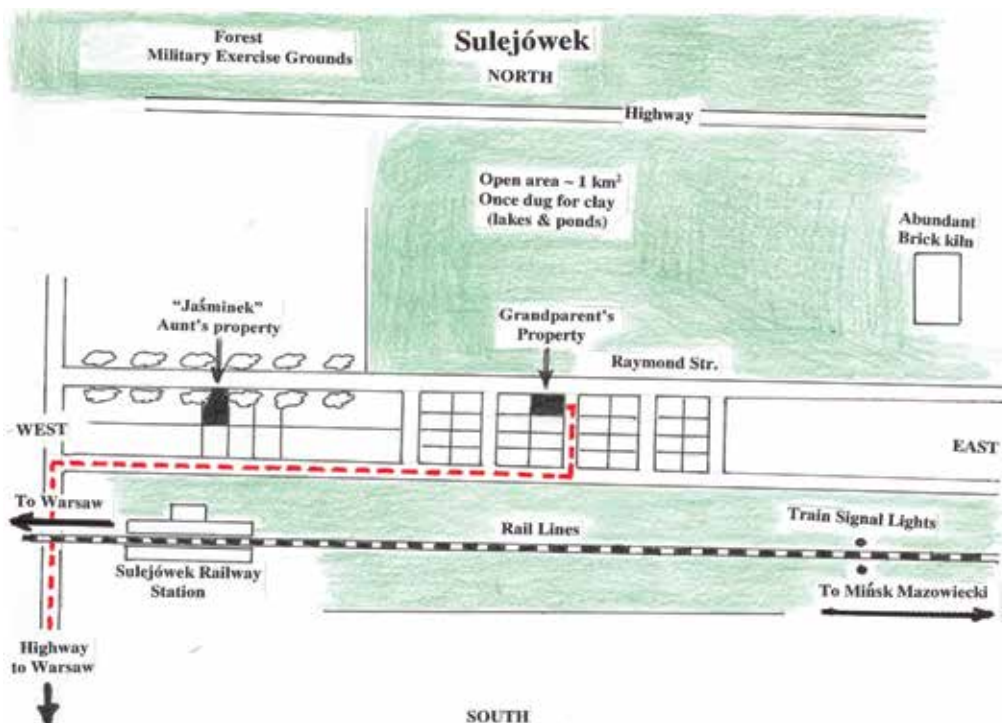
We moved to Sulejowek in 1933.

These last three photos were taken in 1939. In these six years, the garden grew to be almost unmanageable for us. With grandfather's failing health it was getting neglected as well.

Later, during the war, the cost of living shot up and there were no more funds to maintain the house and to pay for the necessary garden supplies. Grandfather died in 1942 and the house was rented in 1943.

Our new neighbourhood

Right across the street, to the North of us, was empty field, about one square kilometre. When we first moved in, there was a brick making factory to the northeast. Workers would dig clay manually and transport it on a narrow gauge rail car, pulled by horses. The clay would be formed into bricks and baked in ovens. About two years later this operation ceased and the fields lay idle. The huge holes dug by the workers, gradually filled with water, and became ponds and lakes. The problem was that the digging produced high vertical walls and terraces at different depths. These lakes were very treacherous, as one step forward would put you from shallow to extremely deep waters. The clay was also very slippery. Many people drowned there, while bathing in these lakes. We children were warned not to get into the water and I never did. We spent most of our time in these fields, which nobody seemed to be looking after. Often local farmers had their cows grazing there. In summer we roamed around them, dug forts, and cut evergreen bush branches to line our trenches. We built fires, baked potatoes in the ashes, and had a wonderful time playing in the endless space.



I don't remember a single person in our family being able to swim, so I never could bath in the ponds under their supervision. We boys did fish and caught lobsters. By the way, I never seen any member of my family in a swimming suit - I have no idea how they looked undressed. I say it because I often wonder where I got my thin legs from.



I don't remember the boy at the very top, but the three boys below were my constant companions. From the left: Wiesiek Szymański, Heniek Wróblewski and Rysiek Wróblewski

In Sulejówek there was no local transportation of any kind. We had to walk any where we wanted to go. There was a rail line to Warsaw and there was a highway north of us but no buses, no taxis, absolutely nothing. Mother walked to the train station, we walked to school, my grandfather walked with us, but I do not remember my grandmother walking

anywhere. When I later received a bicycle, my world expanded exponentially; I could venture far from home.



A rare visit – grandmother's sister and her son (mother's cousin)

We walked anywhere we went, carrying our shopping and anything else. Nobody there had a car. In the city, yes there were cars, but none where we lived. The only car I remember there was when my uncle would come to visit us. Often he would come on a motorcycle. Since he worked in a car dealership, he had access to both. Locally all transportation was horse-driven. The roads were dirt roads with wheel tracks permanently impressed just like rail tracks. The few main roads, for through traffic outside our community, were cobblestone. There you could see transport trucks

and cars. About one kilometre, north of us, there was a main highway, but I hardly ever went there.

Visiting family in nearby communities was not easy. You had to walk to the railway station, take a train, transfer in Warsaw to another train and walk again at the other end. At the same time you had to carry all your belongings taken for the trip. My grandparents and my mother never took us anywhere. Once a year or so, someone would visit us, I hardly ever saw those people again. We had never local visitors. We lived all by ourselves, my grandparents, my mother, my sister, and I. My uncle and aunt would visit us regularly. In all we were seven person family, that is all.



I am here visiting Poland in 1995

Mother worked on the other side of Warsaw, in Ożarów, so she had to transfer trains at the Warsaw train station. The one-way trip to and from work would take her about one-and-a-half hours. She would get up around 5:30 am., walk about one kilometre (rain or shine) to the Sulejówek railway station and then take 20 minutes to get to Warsaw. The train at first was pulled by a coal locomotive, but later, around 1936, it was electric, modern train built in Belgium. It used overhead high voltage lines and had automatically operated doors, just as our subway does.

When I was there in 1995 (60 years later), the train was the same, exactly as I had known it. There were “smoking” and “non-smoking” wagons. On one occasion, the train was full and I had to squeeze into a “smoking” wagon. I stood there, hardly able to move because of the crowded, standing room only space, inhaling secondhand cigarette smoke. In those days “everybody” smoked (though no women)! I was about 11 then and I made a resolution: “I will never smoke. I cannot see how smoking cannot be dangerous to your health.” Indeed, I never smoked although, when I was 12, I experimented with a few cigarettes and found them disgusting.

When I was six years old (1933), I started at the village primary school – where I would study for the next four years. (Most children started school at the age of seven, so I was

always a year younger, smaller and weaker). We had to walk to school, about two kilometres each way. My grandfather always walked my sister and me to school and back home, summer or winter, rain or shine. It was partially a safety issue, as there were always some kids bullying others, there were lots of stray dogs who were quite aggressive, and partially it was to help us on the long walk, by carrying books or changes of clothes and to speed things up (to make sure we arrive at school on time).

By the way

In Sulejówek I developed a fear of dogs, even though we had two dogs at home. Most dogs of our neighbours were guard dogs, they would bark, growl and bite if they could. But the greatest nuisance were the stray dogs, which moved around in a pack, lead by a lead dog. They were scavenging for food, sometimes fighting between themselves. Normally they would ignore you. I remember many times being chased by dogs while riding my bike. I had to lift both legs up to avoid being bitten. Usually they would give up after a short chase.

I have some memories from that school. In winter, boys would slide on the ice. They would run up to it, and then take a long slide at top speed. The one who got the longest slide was a winner. I remember the intense competition for the top honour. I would not dare trying it; my sense of balance is poor. I remember some boys plying the mouth harmonica. Without proper training these village boys did an amazing job. I did not hear much music in those days, so those simple tunes left a lasting impression on me.

Further north, was the cobblestone road and adjacent to it were forests used by the army for training and maneuvers. At times the artillery practiced shooting there, but it was well advertised beforehand. We kids, were not allowed to go into the forest alone because of it. I remember going for a walk with my grandfather there but not very often.



Left
Going east from
Jaśminek along
Raymond Street



Right
Diadzius and I on
a walk in the
forest North of us



Uncle Witold and Aunt Halina invested their savings in real estate, which proved to be the safest investment during the war - and post war - under the Communist rule. This was an investment strategy. They bought a house in Sulejówek but never lived in it themselves. Initially they rented it to Witold's sister who was sick with tuberculosis. After her death, the house was rented to a German Ludwig Figielant who worked for the

German press. It was a villa called "Jaśminek", Raymonta 50 street. It was only a short distance from our house (about one kilometer, west of us), on the same street. It was a small bungalow with a beautiful garden that we called "Jaśminek".

Around 1938, mother arranged for Irka and me to learn German from Mrs. Figielant. (By the way mother spoke German). It did not work, we were too silly, and after a few lessons we had to give up. The couple was very friendly and they were very good tenants.

Sulejówek was also a residence of Marshal Piłsudski who came to fame during WWI and the subsequent repulsion of Russian advances (1918 to 1920). He ruled over Poland in semi-dictatorial manner until his retirement and death shortly before WWII. (After WWI Poland was not ready for democracy. Polish parliament was very divided and ineffective) In his villa in Sulejówek he reportedly had a tamed wolf that he had acquired as a puppy during one of his campaigns. I never have seen the villa, nor the wolf.

By the way

During WWI, there were two Polish generals that commanded separate armies, general Piłsudski and general Haller. My father served under general Haller. General Piłsudski rose to power and his army became the official army of Poland. General Haller's officers (my father included) had to look for civilian jobs and remained on a reserve list. Every year they were called to report to update their skills.

Living conditions in Sulejówek

Living in the suburbs, was a real change for us. I don't remember much of our living conditions in Warsaw, but we must have had electricity, running water and an indoor washroom. Moving to the suburbs of Warsaw changed all that.

On the negative side, there was no electricity or running water, no indoor washroom, basement, or central heating. We used naphtha lamps, and as for water, we had to manually pump it from a well and carry it in a pail. We had an outhouse, a wood stove for cooking and two coal stoves to heat the indoors. To keep the household going was labour intensive, so we had a maid, and the adults were continuously busy. There was not much privacy indoors, as we slept three people in one room (grandmother, sister and I); we did everything in the dining room. In winter it was pretty cold inside and we had to wear layers of clothing.

On the positive side, the outdoors was great. We children were free to roam; we had far more space than we ever had before. There was much less grownup supervision, as we no longer had a nanny. I remember, the first day after moving in. I was awakened by three neighbourhood boys at my bedside. My grandfather introduced them. They were brothers Heniek and Rysiek Cićkiewicz from across the street (I have a picture in my book of the three of us, on page 13) and another boy Wiesiek Szymański, who lived next to them. These three would become my closest friends until the time we moved away. I have not seen them since about 1940.

We started without electricity or sewers, with only well water and coal heating. Each room had to be heated individually. In winter, a maid had to start a fire. There was no basement but we had a shed outside with three rooms for a workshop, laundry and storage for coal. At the near end of the shed was a doghouse and at the far end of the shed was an

outhouse - quite a walk in the blistering cold of winter. (We all used chamber pots for peeing). Two rooms of the house had deep holes dug out for storage of food, vegetables, conserves, etc. The wooden floor would open upwards to give access to that storage and then steps would take you down. This storage was no more than about four feet deep. I remember each evening a maid would bring in naphtha lamps that would burn till we all went to sleep.

Later we got electricity for lights. We never got an electric stove and refrigeration did not exist. We used ice blocks cut out of lakes to keep things cool. First we got a crystal radio that required earphones to listen to. Around 1937 we got a Telefunken radio made in Germany. This was as good as any radio today, except it ran on vacuum tubes. We never got running water or a hot water heater. We had to heat water on the wood / coal stove. For bathing everybody used the same water. We children were first to bathe. There were no showers. My grandparents simply had no money to buy expensive appliances or to install a pumping system. Probably in time they would. We never had a telephone either.

Washing clothes and bedding was a huge operation. In a shed outside, there was a coal stove with huge pots in which all were boiled first, washed by hand, squeezed through rollers, and hung outdoors to dry. Next it all had to be taken to “magiel”(mangle), a factory-like operation that rolled the sheets through a series of wooden rollers (I am not sure what the purpose of this was - I suspect it was done to avoid a need to iron sheets). It would take couple of days to do the washing, so it was not done frequently.

It was a different world. Just imagine, in a space of 80 years how technology has made our lives easier. Before, anything you touched required heavy physical effort and consumed lots of time. That is why domestic help was a must, not luxury, as it is today. All goods were brought by rail and distributed locally by horse and buggy. Attending to the horses was equally labour intensive. One must not forget that this part of Poland, after 150 years of Russia’s domination, was further behind technologically, than most of the Western world.

My grandparents did a wonderful job in transferring this rundown property into a beautiful and comfortable home. Everything needed fixing. In my mother’s room, I remember moisture from the ground seeping up the wall, the paint would peel off, leaving a wet, ugly patch on the wall. Workers had to take a layer of brick, all around a house, inserting three layers of tarpaper and hot bitumen to seal the moisture off. This had to be done two brick length at a time. After this was done we no longer had moisture problems.

By the way

Back in those days cement was not used for laying bricks; lime mortar was used instead. Well ahead of a big construction project, workers would dig a large rectangular hole, a couple of metres deep. The hole would be filled with water and large limestones placed in the hole. After a few days workers would come back and with long tools would stir the content to the consistency of a white paste. They would leave it to age, until it was ready to use. These holes were carefully protected, as the mixture was highly corrosive. Anyone falling into the hole would die.

Because of my grandfather's past gambling, they had little money. Local craftsmen did most of the work. Labour at that time was very cheap. We had two maids, one to cook and clean and another to look after us children and do all other jobs. My grandmother supervised the maids, taught them how to cook and do other jobs. The maids were treated as part of the family, and we children were quite attached to them. Domestic help was quite affordable in the 1930's, Depression years. The villages nearby were overpopulated, and young girls looked for a way to move into the cities. Domestic work was the easiest way to make the gradual change. Life in a village was primitive and there were many things to learn to switch over to a life in the city and to factory work. For one, the use of proper language, manners, and the use of various modern appliances.

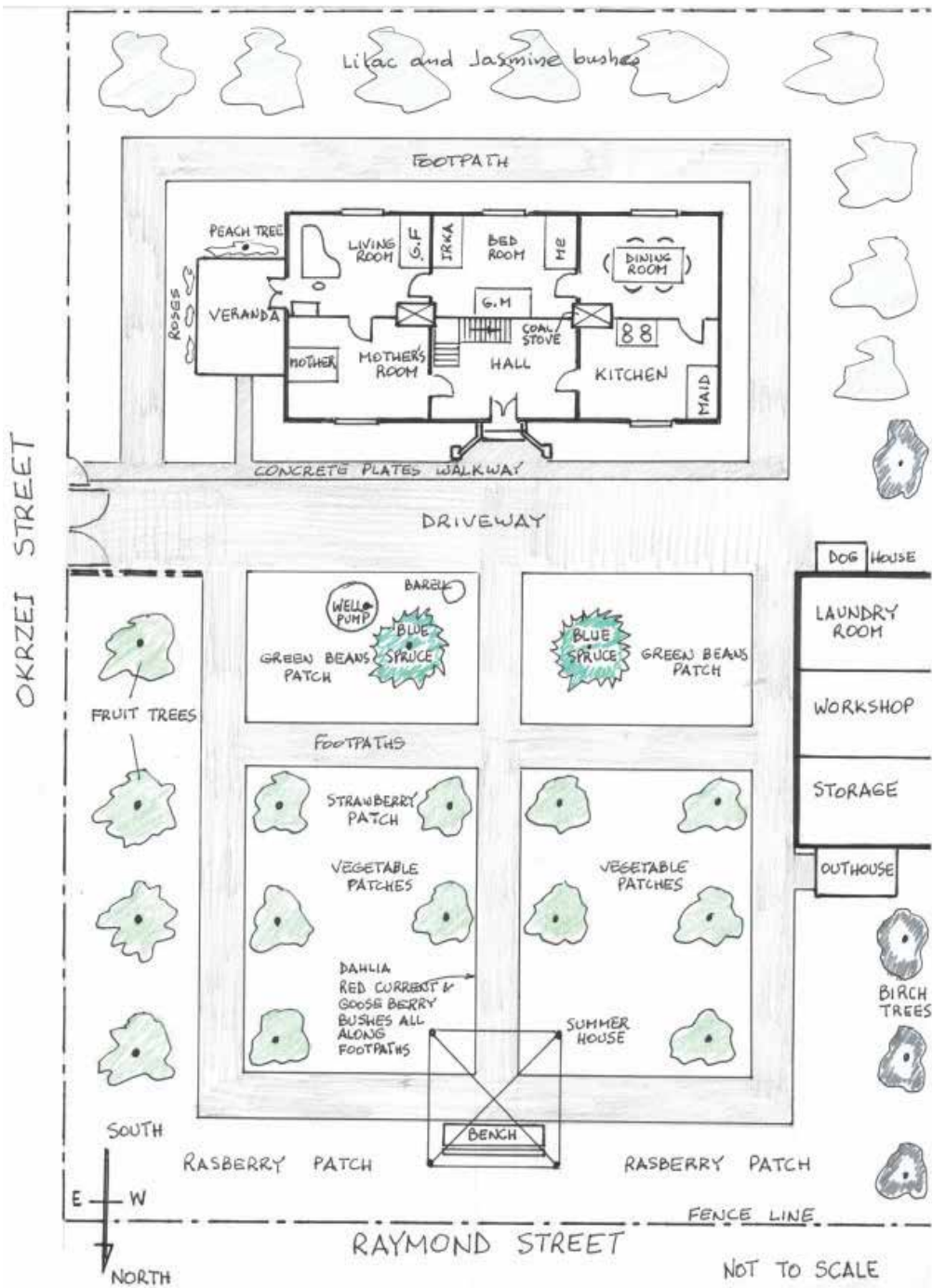
Christmas was a time when traditionally, villagers went around as a large group singing carols and acting out a nativity scene. There were the three kings, but also angels, death and a devil. The devil would chase the domestic maids that would be looking out for their childhood friends. These festivities were eagerly awaited each year and would cause a lot of laughter and excitement. My grandparents would give the actors food and money.

Christmas Eve was a time of feasting. It started when you could see the first star. According to tradition there had to be 12 dishes and no meat. We started with beetroot soup, pasta with poppy seeds (my favourite - it was sweet), fried mushrooms, cold fish in gel, herrings, potato salad, and others dishes. For desert there was "Babka" (sweet baked bread like doughnuts), ginger cookies, etc. After the meal, we lit the Christmas tree (decorated with candles – a real fire hazard) and opened presents. At midnight, it was off to church for midnight mass (but we children went to bed). The next day there would be wild rabbit for Christmas dinner with all the trimmings.

At Easter there was another custom. On the way to church, boys would chase girls and spray them with water. The game was called "dyngus". Naturally the girls ran away and some were smart and brought umbrellas. It was all about fun and laughter and nobody got drenched. There was also an egg hunt. At Easter dinner there was a table centerpiece, with a sugar "lamb that was slain", ham leg as a main meal (with all the trimmings) and many delicacies. As a desert "twaroszek" a twisted pastry, fried in oil and sprinkled with powdered sugar. Light and fluffy, it was delicious.

By the way

As I am working with photos from the distant past, I am struck by this regret: I wish someone had taken a lot of other photos. I wish I had a photo from the roof of the house, for example, showing the whole property. I wish I had photos of every room in the house, of the sheds, of the doghouse and countless others. You never know how they might be useful.





Looking South towards the house



Looking North towards the garden



At North end a bench and a trellis



Looking towards front of the house showing the well



Around 1933 Mother with her boss from work (future second husband). I am about 6. Grandmother and sister



Around 1940. Grandfather sick with asthma



Mother, aunt, and grandmother at the front entrance to the

1995 my first visit to Poland

The property was divided into two (very neglected). The house still there. Veranda in poor shape. Balcony over the veranda is gone, but the door to the balcony, open. Number of improvements done to the house indoors.



2010 visit to Poland with Tina & Juliana
The property was divided into two.
Property very neglected, but was being renovated. Veranda is still there, garden is very neglected



2014 visit to Poland with Tina & Juliana
Renovations completed, looks much better
Two houses on one property. Looks good.



Okrzei Str. was changed as shown
(Tina took a photo of a new street name)

My grandfather looked after the garden, did small repairs, purchased building supplies, and supervised the workers.

In my book “God’s Leading in My Life” on page 9 I mention
“Divine protection – Runaway horse wagon”

Our garden was remarkable; to me it was a Garden of Eden, full of fruits and vegetables of all kinds. My grandparents had the garden planned and planted all from scratch and within the first three years we had more produce than we could use. We had trees such as apples, pears, plums, cherries of more than one variety, a peach bush, raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, red, black and white berries, rhubarb, vegetables such as beans, carrots, peas, radishes, beetroot, and herbs like parsley and dill to name just few. I would pick a really ripe fruit and eat it, or a carrot right out of the ground, wash and eat it. I loved fruits and vegetables. It was a paradise. Just before the war we had so much fruit that we had to pick and sell it.

By the way

I love fruits and vegetables. To this very day I spend more of my grocery money on fruits and vegetables than all other goods combined. I will only eat ripe and juicy fruit.

We needed a guard dog for protection. There was no welfare system so the poor had to beg. They would go from door-to-door begging. A dog would stop them at the fence gate; otherwise they would go to the front door, often stealing whatever they came across on the way. Gypsies, too, were notorious for stealing. They would come on their horse-drawn wagons and spread out. Some would sharpen knives, others would lead a muzzled bear on a chain and make a show, while others would tell fortune or sell trinkets door-to-door.



We had two dogs there. “Nero” a mongrel outdoor dog, and “Bim” an indoor fox terrier. Both were a trouble. “Nero” had a poor sense of smell, had problems recognizing people in the dark, and managed to bite everybody in the family. Bim used to pee during the night, especially in winter. To this day I have a poor view of dogs. Outside, stray dogs in Sulejów were vicious, chasing bikes and

presenting constant danger. Most were guard dogs, but Nero was not much of a guard dog, often let beggars go by him.

At times we had chicken, ducks or geese in the garden, to fatten them up before they were ready for slaughter. The maid would kill a bird and we children would help to pick off the feathers. It was on such an occasion that our guard dog “Nero”, who was on a chain nearby, and who badly wanted a bite of the bird, bid me instead. As I was reaching out for something, my behind presented him with a tempting alternative. This dog was a nuisance, totally unpredictable. You could play with him one day, other times - stay away. As we run about playing catch, he would get crazy. I never understood why grandparents did not

get rid of him.

My grandfather often told me stories about his youth, and his love for horses he rode on his family's estate. (They had over 100 horses) That once prompted a discussion about a pony we had seen on sale. We both got excited, and as far as we were concerned it was a done deal. On the way back home, we were already planning where his stable would be, etc. On arriving home we shared the good news with grandmother. Her answer was "No!"

Although we were only 20 kilometres from Warsaw, all around us were villages that supplied much of our food, other than what we could grow ourselves. The standard of living on the villages was more primitive, so were their language skills. The class distinctions of the past were still readily visible - in time they would vanish, but it would take many generations.

Without any refrigeration all produce had to be supplied and consumed daily. Every morning peasants from the nearby villages would bring - by horse-drawn buggy, milk, butter, cheese and eggs that we purchased just before breakfast. In hot summer days what was not consumed would be lowered in a bucket into a well and partly submerged in water. Others would bring vegetables. The baker would come around with breads and buns. The butcher would sell meats. For anything else we would walk to Miłosna, a little town about one kilometre east of us.

Miłosna was 90 percent Jewish. There were tailors, shoemakers and all kinds of craftsmen and stores. These Jews were very poor. They were Orthodox, wearing long black garments, black hats and side curls. They spoke Yiddish among themselves and they spoke Polish with a distinctive accent. We lived side by side without much trouble, although we kids would occasionally tease Jewish kids. On some occasion I remember boys throwing stones at a class of Jewish schoolchildren walking by. Later during the war, this little town would become a ghost town. The Nazis evacuated all Jews first to Warsaw Ghetto and from there to the gas chambers.

Poland with a population of about 30 million had about 3.5 million Jews. Most of them had German names, because when they first arrived, they were given those names by the German authorities at the time. In cities, many Jews abandoned their Orthodox faith, a few became Christians, changed names into Polish names (mostly named after cities like Poznański). Jews always aspired for higher education. Many became doctors, dentists, lawyers and were prominent in business, finance and politics. They suffered terrific persecution under the Nazis. When I went back to Poland in 1995 there were hardly any Jews left at all.

I remember going with my grandfather shopping to Miłosna, to a hardware store. I was not older than 10. While he was doing his shopping I kept collecting screws, washers and nails from the floor. On our way home, a walk of about one kilometre, he noticed I had a

paper bag in my hand. When he enquired about it, I told him I collected the things in it from the floor. His response was that it was not right, it is like stealing. We went back to the store and he made me apologize to the Jewish storekeeper. It was very embarrassing, I would never do it again. My grandfather was teaching me honesty.

Talking of Jews being a minority in Poland. I was a minority myself and learned how it feels. Discrimination and racial prejudice were always there lurking below the surface. There were tensions. My great grandmother died in a fire, at her estate, started by Jews. Jews were not allowed to own land but they were in trade and in the money lending business, which did not make them too many friends. But I've learned there are always good and bad people in any group.

I remember as a child having an argument with my grandmother and calling her house a "chicken house". Her reply was, "Wish that you will be able to have such a chicken house yourself". I often thought about it. Our first house was not even half as good as hers and our second house, although better as a house, lacked the garden of Sulejówek. In many ways, it was a good house and an even better home. That memory kept me humble. There is more to a house than what meets the eye!

My personal freedom

First year in Sulejówek, I was strictly confined to our garden, all fenced in, and only able to talk to the neighbourhood kids through the gaps between the wooden planks of the fence. Sometimes, neighbourhood children would be allowed to come in, to play with us, but not too often. Most children my age were roaming the deserted, dirt streets, barefooted in the summer, on their own without any supervision - but not me.



1932 my whole head is bandaged

There was a reason for this. As we moved to Sulejówek, I had a health problem. I was often sick as a young child. There were no antibiotics in those days, and the curing methods used then are no longer in use today. One such method to cure a cold, was to plaster your back with dozens of vacuum glasses that would bring your blood to the surface of the skin. You were left with a pattern of bloody circles that would last for a week. I received that treatment every so often; it was supposed to reduce fever and speed up

recovery. But one time the treatment was different. I suffered terrible earaches and had my eardrums pierced to relieve the pressure. For half a year I remained totally deaf.

When my grandparents were busy renovating the house, designing the garden, planting trees, building a well and fixing the fence, my opportunity came. As soon as there was a gap in the fence I took off, and from then on, there was no force in this world capable of holding me inside. I would climb the fence to join my friends. In the end my grandparents agreed to let me play on the street with other children. It was safe, and at first I did not venture too far from the house.

My grandparents were always friendly, but distant from our neighbours. It was a strange neighbourhood, poor working class, somewhat rough and individualistic. Families did not have friendly relationships, but kept to themselves. Often there were domestic disputes and even physical fights. There was drunkenness. There was no trust. If anything people tended to avoid each other. Everybody had a guard dog so you could hardly walk into the neighbour's house. I don't remember ever being invited to my friends' houses, never talked to their parents. We kids roamed around totally unsupervised. Everybody was too busy to care what we did. What a contrast to what we do today with our kids.

I remember one incident, when I was about eight, that brings shivers to me to this day. I stood by a table playing. Unknown to me, a maid was washing the dining room floor behind me. For some reason I kicked back, lifting my leg from my knee down. The heel of my boot hit the maid on her forehead just about the eye. I had metal inserts at the heel of my boot. She went down, did not pass out nor did she bleed. My grandmother rushed to help, put her in bed, put a cold compress on her forehead. I apologized profusely to her, felt terribly about it. It was an accident, but I felt so guilty about it. There was no permanent damage, but it was a terrible thing to happen.

My favourite spot in the house was on the roof. From the hallway, steep stairs led to the attic. You opened a horizontal door and there was a spacious area under the roof you could walk in. It was dark and hot in summer. There was a smell of dill hanging to dry and other herbs as well. At the east side of the attic, Uncle Witold and Aunt Halina build their own room. In the attic, along the eaves of the sloping roof, there were boxes of old newspapers and memorabilia, I liked to browse through those. A ladder lead to a trapdoor which opened out onto the roof. There a board was stretched between two chimneys. I would climb up there and look around. There were not many high places you could do it in Sulejówek, as it was a very flat terrain.

In winter I spent a lot of time outdoors tobogganing and skating on the ponds. This place was wintertime paradise, with lots of ice surfaces and slides. My friends tried to be pulled by their dog on their sled on ice. It did not work until they discovered the dog loved to chase me. This was not very smart for me, as from then on their dog would always bother me. Skates were attached to our normal shoes, fitted with a metal plate with a hole in the heel of the shoe. The skate would hook into the heel, turn 90 degrees, and clamp with a turning key to grasp both sides of the shoe sole. There was no ankle support at all. I never was a good skater and my ankles often twisted to make skating difficult.

In Sulejówek, I remember going to a movie theatre watching silent movies with subtitles. There was a piano player accompanying the action with appropriate background sound. I remember seeing Charlie Chaplin and cowboy movies. There was not really any entertainment there at all. Occasionally a circus would come to town. For anything else you had to take a train to Warsaw, only 20 minutes away. Except to visit Aunt Halina and Uncle Witold, we rarely went there. Mother was always busy and my grandparents never left home.

In my book “God’s Leading in My Life” on page 9 I mention
“Miracle No.1 – Cork explosion

Summer vacations were a time when we boys had little to do and we got into all kinds of trouble. We were not supervised, not trained in anything and as we got older, we were simply bored. I got into trouble on few occasions, and my sister, Irka, always made sure I did not get away with anything. So much for an older sister. It is when I played with boys alone that I had more freedom. Irka never roamed the streets as we boys did.

Once, a Gypsy saw us playing with a coin and wanted it. So she offered to tell our fortune. She said to one boy that he would lose his parents and live on the street (rather cruel) and she told me that I would go away over the big sea. Both came to be true. I wonder.

By the Way

In Poland I remember many Gypsies. They would not settle in any one place, but travelled from one place to another in horse-driven wagons resembling the American Wild West. They were viewed by the local population with suspicion and were suspected of petty theft. I believe they also travelled across borders to other countries, wandering about Europe. According to my mother-in-law, my wife’s father was a Gipsy (Karl Angermüller), but that is another story.

Another infrequent visitor to our community was a circus. It would arrive in summer, once a year, stay over the weekend, and generate a lot of excitement.

As for minorities, the only ones were the Jews. I have not come across any others. In Poland, I have never seen a black person.

Our frequent visitors

My Uncle Witold and Aunt Halina visited us on weekends. In the five years living there I recall only one other visitor, grandmother’s sister and nephew. We lived a pretty isolated life. Witold and Halina built a room for themselves in the attic of the house with a balcony over the veranda. Because they were frequent visitors to Sulejówek, they invested some of their own money to make their stay there more comfortable. They stored some of their personal belongings there so that they would not need to carry them with them on each visit.



My aunt on a motorcycle Borowski and wife, My aunt and uncle Witold

Uncle Witold worked for a GM car dealership “Elibor” in

Warsaw. He knew English, and did all the correspondence for the dealership with U.S. suppliers. Working in the parts department, he always had access to the use of a car or a

motorcycle. At the same time Witold and Halina were personal friends of the owner of the dealership (L. J. Borkowski). The four of them, on weekends, travelled together all over

Poland in a chauffeured car.

By the way.

I remember Uncle Witold bringing me the previous year's car catalogues, showing the glossy pictures of GM cars. I would play with them, cut pictures out with scissors, take them to school and show them to my friends.

Aunt Halina worked as a receptionist and telephone operator, in a business or government organization. She was a born businesswoman. Very well organized, efficient, clear thinking, logical, had an excellent memory and respectful manners. She was good in saving and managing money, organizing and arranging legal transactions both in business and for the family. Over the years she took care of many of our business problems. Both of them worked full time, had a good income and lead a comfortable yet modest life, saving and investing money wisely. Shortly before the war they rented a bungalow on the East side of river Vistula, in Saska Kępa. They employed a live-in maid, but had no children or pets. Apart from that, I know little of their friends or interests.

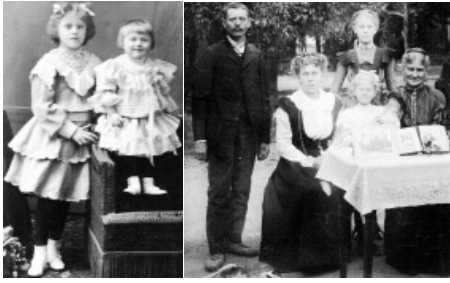
Whenever they were free they would visit us. My aunt did not get along with Witold's family (who were not very friendly anyway). The 20 kilometre ride to Sulejówek by car or motorcycle provided a quick escape from busyness of the city. In Sulejówek there was peace, fresh air, fruits, vegetables, rest and a welcoming family. Uncle Witold would often read or study books while he was with us, while Halina spent time with her parents.

Uncle Witold would often take us for a drive, which was quite a treat since we knew no one else with a car locally. The local highway was made of round stones, set in sand. Going over such a surface left you feeling like a milkshake.

I remember having a ride in a two seat, semi-sport car, where in the rear compartment (a place normally taken by a car trunk) it would open into two, forward-facing seats. Riding in those seats on the dusty roads required immediate washing of your hair. On another occasion, Witold took me for a ride on his motorcycle. I was holding on for dear life. It was a really bumpy ride.

On one occasion my uncle invited me for a sleep over to their home in Warsaw. Upon my arrival he proceeded to arrange a bed for me. His fussing, irritated my aunt, who was jealous for his attention and she made a scene. Aunt Halina was like that, demanding, moody, complaining, and hard to please. She had a heart of gold but the temper of a spoiled child. She liked to be the center of attention at a party, but she was a poor loser. We all had to step gently around her as the slightest thing could offend her. She always liked me, but then she had those unprovoked outburst of discontent. Later I would leave Poland, fearful of ever having to depend on her for help.

Mother and aunt Halina



Mother 1924 age 27

It always seemed to me that mother and her sister (who was younger by five years) had an adversarial relationship. They did not get along. They were very different.

Yet my aunt was always very helpful to her especially during the war. It seemed to me that my aunt had a guilt complex – that she thought she owed her help to my mother. This remains to me like a dark family secret. I never understood the dynamics between the two of them, loyalty, yet tension.

Mother was close to her mother; Halina was a favourite of her dad. Halina and her dad were close. She understood him. (Both of them, at times, were in trouble with grandmother) As grandfather had a second job looking after the finances of a horse race track, Halina also worked there, part-time, as a cashier. Grandfather would give Halina money to bet on horses, which she did for him.

Mother and Halina were opposites. Mother was serious, hard working, studious, ambitious. Halina was more for fun, although she was very responsible otherwise. From her early teenage years mother suffered abdominal pains that she had to live with. She was restless, unsettled, searching.

Mother and Aunt Halina were both very musical.

My grandmother often told stories of how mother and Aunt Halina, as children, would give performances for family and friends. Mother played piano and Halina sang. Halina had a beautiful voice, which she broke by poor training techniques. Later on, she could still sing well, except not operatic songs. Mother played on our grand piano until we had to sell it during WWII for food. She loved playing the piano; she would put her soul into it, her broken dreams.

By the way

What the reader must understand is that mother, who had polyposis, which manifested in her early teenage years, suffered stomach aches all her life. Being sick must have worried her deeply and contributed to the way she lived and the choices she made. For one thing she did not expect to live long, so in her life, there was always a sense of urgency.

As a child I remember that she drank very hot drinks and expected me to do the same.

Tina reminds me of mother in the way she pursues her passions. Before the war, at mother's workplace, they were looking for staff to train in first aid in anticipation of the outbreak of hostilities. Mother volunteered. From then on she took evening courses of all

kinds and volunteered in the hospital. She told me she had a passion to be a doctor. She practiced on me, giving me injections, which were often prescribed for various reasons. She was very good; they were painless (and at the time needles were thick and clumsy). During the war mother run underground hospital in her spare time. That was typical of her. She would over commit, work herself to death, have so many ambitious goals. As a child I was often sick. My greatest fear was tuberculosis as some of our relatives died of it (including Uncle's Witold's sister). Strangely enough I got really healthy once I left home (and her care), but I might have just outgrown my weaknesses.



Mother also pursued happiness. I have a photo of her from 1933, with her boss, who would later become her second husband, Kazimierz Stefański. She must have been spending a lot of time with him. The late hours at

which she often came home and frequent absences would testify to this.

By the way

She lived a short life. I noticed that my mother, my sister's son Andrzej and my wife Irma all died relatively young and all three had that passion to get as much out of life as they could. Just as if they knew that their lives would be short.

Kazimierz must have had a head injury (he had a metal plate in his forehead, or so I was told). He must have had history of drinking, because mother married him on the condition that he abstains from alcohol, to which he readily agreed to. But as my aunt recalled on my visit in 1995, soon after they were married, late one night, he came home drunk. Mother did not let him in, so he laid by the front door of the apartment and kicked the door all night. The marriage lasted a year.

The year of decision

When I was 10 years old (1937), my grandparents put pressure on my mother to take greater responsibility for us. They were getting on in age, we children became more of a problem to manage, and my mother was hardly ever home. Two years earlier mother remarried, left us with her parents, and went off to live with her new husband. The marriage lasted only a year, but my grandparents got scared. What else was she going to do? With her many ambitions and an overly busy schedule, there was no hope in sight. Never again would they risk being put in a position of having full responsibility for our upbringing. Mother had to look for a way out, and a solution she found was to put us in residential schools.

By the way

Residential Schools – in Canada these were schools for the poor, native children, who were often starved and abused. Not so in Poland. These were the very best schools for the rich and upper class children and here they received Christian education of top academic quality.

There were other reasons too. The school we attended, was a village school and we needed better education. Mother always impressed on us the importance of good education. I was like a sponge, eager to learn. Later in life, when I was on my own, I would use her advices to guide me in decision-making.

No one helped me with homework or even checked to see if I had any. In everything I had to struggle on my own. I don't remember my sister being any help to me either. The area in which I could have used a lot of help was spelling - I was awful in polish spelling and remain so to this very day. I had no clue how to learn it on my own.

By the way

Children need both parents, father and mother, loving and caring. Anything else will leave behind painful consequences that the child will suffer for the rest of their life. I do! Why?

Material needs – two incomes, better material resources

Personal presence – they share duties, just having more personal time with the children

Mother – is very important in infancy and the toddler years, models a female to the children

Father – most important in later childhood to develop courage and risk-taking, models what it is to be a man

Father and Mother together – model appropriate relationship between a man and a woman

Having a mother alone, I had hardly any time with her alone and we had no money for any extras.

Having no father, meant that I was terrible in sports, and had mostly women to model on.

Later when I married, I had no idea how a proper marriage was supposed to function.

Yes, there are circumstances in which single parenthood is unavoidable, but it is devastating to the upbringing of a child. Naturally, being an orphan is even worse. No wonder there are so many messed up people around.

I showed some talent in drawing, but it was never encouraged or developed. Artistic ability comes from my father's side of the family. My father was a hobby painter. My cousin Wojciech Urbanowicz made a living as an art painter and lived in Italy, where his father was buried in the Polish, Monte Casino cemetery.

By the way

Wojciech's father Stanisław Urbanowicz is buried in Monte Casino cemetery. During WWII he served in the Polish army (2nd Corp) and took part in the Italian campaign where he was killed in the battle for Monte Casino that Polish troops took. I never knew it when I was in Italy after the war. If you go back to 1927 you will find both Stanisław and Wojciech mentioned. We lived in the same apartment building in Poznań.

I read a lot of books; I played some board games, especially in the long winter days where playtime outdoors was limited. The favourite family game was a card game "solitaire". Everybody in the family took turns playing it, with others watching and offering advice. Grandfather, grandmother, mother, aunt, sister, and me - we all got the bug. I often play it even today. I played it as a prisoner of war (POW) and throughout my life. It is a pastime I try to limit to no more than half-an-hour; it is a time waster.

I never had any private lessons of any kind, never got any physical education training as part of an organized sport, art classes or cultivated any hobbies. No grownup ever played with me. No one in the family seemed to be interested in sports, so I had to learn everything on my own, without anyone correcting me. I skated, tobogganed, played street soccer, or roamed around aimlessly.

One game we boys played from time-to-time, was throwing a ball, the size of soccer ball. On a rectangular field, at opposite shorter sides of the field were two ball throwers. In the mid-field were other players. The ball thrower's job was to strike out the mid-field players by hitting them with a ball. If the mid-field player caught the ball, the two exchanged positions. The ball otherwise passed between the two ball throwers until they were in a position to eliminate a mid-field player without danger of him catching the ball. The mid-field players run back and forth, to avoid being hit with a ball. Naturally everybody wanted to be a ball thrower. The game ended when all mid-field players were eliminated.

In 1944, I taught myself to swim. Because of a lack of instruction, I never was good in any sport. One wonders if the real cause of the problem was the absence of a father. After all, fathers have an important role in the lives of boys and girls. I would have liked to hear my sister's opinion of what it meant to grow up without a father. Every Father's Day when I hear the stories of good dads, I feel like telling how it was to live without a Dad. Regardless, I had no natural abilities for sports. To this date my only hobby is work.



The only picture of my bike.
Irka posing (she did not know
how to ride the bike!)

My Uncle Witold was different. He was into sports. He was a graduate of the Physical Education Institute, and was a qualified sports instructor. He skied, played regularly on a soccer team, and took part in long marching competitions of a semi-military organization (Strzelec). In 1938 he gave me a bike and taught me how to ride it.

As I got older, I would venture further away from home on my bike and I became harder to control (they would say I was running wild).

To illustrate this point, one incident stays in my mind. A bunch of us boys, rode our bikes to a distant farmer's field, where there was an enormous wild pear tree (as big as an oak tree). It's fruit was of a type, I have never seen since. These wild pears were small and round, about an inch in diameter, green and inedible until they got all brown inside, seemingly rotten. You could eat them then, and they were delicious. We got to the field and started to collect the pears when someone noticed a bunch of kids coming out of the village after us. We fled, but only managed to get back to the road when they caught up with us. They started accusing us of stealing (which was true), threatened us, and searched us for pears. In all this commotion I managed slowly to inch my way away while the rest of them argued. At some point I sprinted out on my bike trying to escape. At this my friends proclaimed that I was their bandleader and the responsible party. The bike

chase begun! I never looked back; I peddled as hard as I could, over the railway tracks and then weaving along streets where I hid. That way we all got saved, but it was a close call. On few other occasions I got into trouble too.

In conclusion, the first five years in Sulejówek were my most carefree years in my life, but at the same time the most neglectful time for my development. Little supervision, no parental guidance, no individual training in anything. I was often bored and aimless. This could not go on. One would have to have been blind not to see it. I would be getting into more and more troubles. This is how I see it today.

At that time however, I was 10, and I saw it as a total rejection, abandonment and punishment. I hoped that I could be forgiven and things would go back to normal. When it didn't happen, I felt unloved, without hope and became totally confused.

Spiritual lesson – being in the dark

Just like as a child, when I could not understand why my mother was putting me through really hard times but it was for my good, so in real life we struggle when God lets some bad things happen to us for what He alone knows is for our good. Just like Job could not understand when he was hit with adversity, so it is with us. All that we know is to rest on the knowledge that God is good, and He has a purpose that in the end will benefit us.

By the way

This was the only time in my life that I doubted that my family really loved me.

Summer camp

In the Summer, prior to sending me to a residential school, mother sent me to a summer camp affiliated with her work, to get me accustomed to being away from home. I was not much good at anything apart from school. I was not used to discipline and being ordered around. At the camp I was bored and often left out of many games. I hated the camp with a passion, so the experiment backfired on her.



I am the one that the older boy rests his arm on my head



Breakfast at camp. I am turned with my back to the camera walking for more

I remember one Sunday, Uncle Witold promised to visit me by car. I boasted to other kids about it. That Sunday afternoon I waited and waited all day and he never came to visit me. I got a lesson – not to brag any more

One incident I remember from the camp; we were going for a group walk along a road when a horse-and-buggy, moving slowly in the same direction, caught up with us. A few of us jumped on the buggy, I landed on the step, and smiled at the elderly gentleman driving. He did not say a word, looked me straight in the eye, and accelerated the horse to a gallop. I was suddenly in trouble and had to jump off in a hurry. That taught me a lesson not to be cocky again.

I also remember breakfasts served on long picnic tables, with fresh buns and a cup of hot chocolate. Normally I would not drink anything with milk, I hated the skin that would often form on the milk surface, but this chocolate drink had no skin and it tasted delicious. I was always a fussy eater. I would not touch milk or butter and had many other likes and dislikes. My finicky tastes would carry on even to the war years, but got better as I got older.

1937 - 1939 Two years in Ostrzeszów, Poland - Residential School

When I was ten years old (1937), after the summer camp, mother placed me and my sister in residential schools run by Roman Catholic brothers and nuns respectively, in a little town called Ostrzeszów far away from home (I've been told it was 10 kilometres from the German border). I hated the summer camp experience and begged mother not to send me away to the residential school. She had little choice. The best she could do was to keep Irka and me in the same town so we could see each others on weekends. She could not afford the prices in Warsaw, nearer home.

In my book "God's Leading in My Life" on page 9 I mention
"God's move in my life – No. 1 – God draws me to Himself"

The first year was a disaster for me. In Sulejówek I had freedom, maybe too much of it, but here I was under military-style discipline, rational but loveless. I cried every night in my bed, where no one could see. I wrote desperate letters to mother to get me out of there, but no one came to my rescue. By the end of this school year I knew I was beaten and I accepted it. Something broke up inside of me. I lost trust in others and began to depend on myself to shape my future. I lost my rebelliousness, became more thoughtful and I also started praying. I became very religious. A lot of what I am now dates back to this period of my life. When my mother was dying six years later, she told me she knew that she lost me at that time, never again did I trust her or cuddle for her love.

Turning to God in my distress

Up to this point, religion was a rarely-used word in our family. We were all Roman

Catholics but in name only. We hardly ever went to church, Jesus was hardly ever mentioned, and we went along as if God did not matter. I was baptized and received some catechism teaching, but had little understanding of the significance of it all. At the residential school, being immersed in religion was a culture shock for me. Eventually I learned the Latin script to be an altar boy, but served in that capacity infrequently.

Spiritual lesson – turning to God

When things go well we hardly think of God, we are doing fine on our own. It is often when things go badly that we turn to God. No wonder that God uses these times to draw us to Himself. Unless you were raised in a Christian family in which God was honored on every occasion, you need those times of trouble to even consider God. I did not know God, but in the anguish of loneliness, God spoke to me and planted new thoughts in my heart that have never left me. Those troublesome years were at the same time most beneficial years for my life.

A most embarrassing moment happened to me while the congregation prayed the rosary. Our church was attended by the girls from the nun's convent, with my sister and all her schoolmates. Some of us had to sing opening verses of each group of prayers, followed by the singing of the whole congregation. For some reason it was my turn. I never sang before and I am a terrible singer. Sure enough my singing did not miraculously get better. Out of tune, with half completed verses, because I got out of breath, it was enough to scare the bravest. I got some really critical looks from the girls and thought of hiding myself for good. I do not remember ever again being asked to sing. Thanks heaven!

The Christian brothers were intelligent, godly people. They were rational, excellent communicators, just and patient. They acted logically and justly, but one thing was missing; there was no physical expression of love. Yes, I was treated well, any question that I had was answered logically, but impersonally. It was a very sterile environment inhabited by emotionless robots. We joked and had laughs but somehow it was only skin deep, not penetrating to your soul. Years later I treated Roland this way; it was the only way I knew how to be!

If the Christian brother's attitude was beyond approach, it was totally different story with the boys. There was a lot of teasing, put downs and ridicule. If they got your number, the bunch would be after your blood day and night. The only place you got some peace was late at night in your bed. There was where I cried a lot. I was small for my age, skinny and had thin bones. They called me "spider legs". It was a cruel environment in that way. I learned here a bad habit of putting others down and delivering cutting remarks that I have to control to this very day.

Here is where I began fantasizing, creating my own secret world, day-dreaming and escaping reality. When things are bad and out of control you need something else to maintain your sanity. I no longer remember what this world was like, but in it I was a hero. There were figures representing love, friendship and admiration. For years I would continue returning to my secret world. I think, it was when I married that I broke that habit, relieved to live in the real world. A friend once told me that before he got sent to a

concentration camp, he was interrogated by the Gestapo (Nazi secret police) and was confined for one year to solitary confinement. When he was finally taken out of his cell he cried. In this cell he had created a world of his own, the world of imagination. It was a beautiful world that he was unwilling to be torn away from.

The public school

I went to a public school in town for grades 5 and 6, because the Catholic private school started only at grade 7. (In Poland we had six grades public school, four years gymnasium and two or three years lyceum, followed by five years of university). In the residential school I lived and had my meals, free time, did my homework, etc., but attended a public school in town. There were only two boys like this in the whole school, and we two were the only exception. We walked from the residential school to the public school on our own.

Schools in the western Poland differed from those in central Poland, there was more of a German influence. One must remember that 20 years earlier, Poland was still partitioned and had been for over 150 years, with the west under Prussia and the centre and the east under Russia. I remember when I first arrived in my class, the teacher asked me what grades I had, I answered 5's, which were tops. The class burst into laughter for in the west these were the bottom marks (best mark was 1). Discipline in class was much stricter here. You got ruler strikes on your open hand, teachers would hit you on the head, squeeze your neck or cheek, and in the principal's office you got the strap. I was careful enough to avoid the harsher kinds of punishments, but got still exposed to pushing, scolding, and name calling by the teachers.

Two classes where I did very poorly were physical education and crafts, in which we had to work with carpenter tools. We had a regular gym with all the apparatuses and kids trained on them from grade 1. In the village school in Sulejówek all we did was to play ball. I was petrified of the gym. Since I was small and physically weak crafts was another disaster; the saw was far too heavy for me! Both of those classes were run by a tall male teacher, whom most of us feared for his enforcement of rules. He could not stand the sight of me. The feeling was mutual.

I was pretty good in story telling and was doing great, reading my essays aloud. That is, until my teacher called me to the front and started looking over my shoulder and discovered a mass of spelling errors. From that time on, she broke my flow by constant picking on those errors. The village school in Sulejówek was not teaching me well and it was high time I changed school. Here I had to do homework and under the watchful eyes of the Christian brothers I had no choice but to study. Academically it was good for me. After six years with the Christian brothers my education really blossomed.

I remember that the two of us, who attended public school, were never in a hurry to get back to the residential school and its discipline. We lingered around, looking into shop windows, buying a treat, like a puffed sugary cake that just melted in your mouth.

However we had to be back in time for lunch.

Once back in the Residential school, although for the two of us it really was not a school but a residential place, we joined class 1 of the gymnasium. We had to do our homework in their classroom. A Christian brother sat at the teacher's desk reading a book, and we all had to be absolutely silent. To go to a washroom you had to ask permission. There were two hours of homework each afternoon before supper.

By the way

At that time we had no textbooks (I don't remember having any). The teacher wrote all we needed to learn on a blackboard. We copied it to into our notebooks and learned from there. There were books in a library for reading assignments. In the classroom we had work assignments that the teacher checked. We had little homework as there were no photocopiers to produce copies for each student, only what we could copy from the blackboard, which was not much.

In the residential school

We slept in a long room that held 10 beds, a meter apart, facing another 10 beds on the opposite side, for a total of 20. At the head of the bedroom sat Christian brother, on duty as long as the light was on. Afterwards one Christian brother would be on duty throughout the night, supervising all the bedrooms. There had to be absolute silence throughout the night or he would show up to investigate. We had time to wash (he would inspect to ensure we had done a good job, especially behind our ears). In the morning, lights went on and we all had to get up immediately. It was all strictly regimented, intermixed with prayers.

We ate in a large dining hall, a Christian brother heading each table seating about 20 boys. After supper we had playtime and often went for walks. I do not remember if our school had a big playground, but I do remember many, many walks. We would walk in town and in the neighbouring countryside. Everything started with a prayer. Twice a day we attended chapel. I estimate we prayed 30 times a day, which is why I do not like praying aloud before meals. I sometimes pray, but in my heart.

Sundays after lunch we often went for long walks, in a group, always lead by a Christian brother. The conversation often centered on theological topics and I loved those discussions. I remember passing a Protestant church and the Christian brother explaining it was a German, heretic church. Over time I became deeply committed to the Lord.

Being out of town, I never went home on weekends as a lot of others did. In a way, this added to my frustrations. Over the weekend there were only a handful of boys in the residential school. The majority went going to be with their families. Many others had frequent visitors. Not so with us. During the school year, mother would come by train to visit us at most twice a year. Otherwise we wrote letters to each other. My relief came from visiting my sister Irka, across the city, in a girl's school run by nuns. Our visits did not stop me from taking part in the Sunday walks.

I remember on one occasion we walked along a railway line. We walked on top of a deep

cut with railway track deep below. We came to an overpass bridge and about three of us decided to walk on the other side of the track from the rest of a group. Suddenly a bunch of hoodlums emerged and started chasing the three of us. I remember running down the bank, across the railway tracks and up the other side of the bank to join our group and to safety. Wow! It was scary!

By the way

Here in school I learned to play pingpong (table tennis). I got reasonably good at it, and I enjoyed playing it for the rest of my life. I also played dominos, but never enjoyed chess or card games; I had no patience for these.

Reappearance of Father

We had not heard from him since 1930, so it was a big surprise when we did. Obviously he wanted to get involved in our lives. He had become a prosperous businessman. His business expanded from vinegar and mustard to manufacturing candies and high-class boxes of chocolates. Father remarried a former actress but he had no other children. His second wife drank and was on drugs; it was an expensive marriage. (Years later I found out that his family were saying to him “you had a good wife and children, now what have you got?”). That year father renewed his interest in us and both my sister and I started receiving packages of chocolate candies from my father’s factory. As a result I got many tooth cavities and had some painful dental work done. We wrote letters back and forth.

By the way

Dentistry back in the 1930s was primitive compared to today’s standards. Foot pedal operated drill made tooth drilling very painful. Injection needles were thick and clumsy. Pain killers were also not as effective. I dreaded going to a dentist.



I remember one particular exchange when our class was going for a trip to Częstochowa. This city is famous for a painting of Mary, which is said to have miraculous healing powers. On this painting Mary has a very dark complexion and two cuts on her cheek inflicted on her during a Mongolian invasion centuries ago. The legend has it, that when that took place, Mary bled. Every year thousands of pilgrims travel to Czeszochowa hoping for healing.

Our school planned for such a pilgrimage. I saw it as an opportunity to wrestle some money from my Father. I presented an elaborate expense sheet, far in excess of what I really needed. To his credit - he did not fall for it, and I ended up getting nothing. This taught me a lesson not to be dishonest.

Doctor’s error

When I was 11 years old (1938), I received an injection that killed most of my white blood cells, a doctor’s error that caused severe anemia. That year I spent in bed, still in the residential school’s sickbay, weak and unable to attend primary school in town. I must

have had homework assignments and infrequent visits to school, but most of the time I felt terribly weak and exhausted. This sickness caused me to think less of my being away from home and more of longing to regain my health.

There were disturbing rumors of war and unrest. My memory of that year is mostly of gloom and doom. By the end of that school year, I graduated to a gymnasium, even though I had missed so many classes. Later, I experienced gaps in my education that often caused me problems. It might have been better if I had failed that year. But my mother got along very well with my home class teacher, and the lady gave me a passing mark. On the other hand, if I had failed, it would make it impossible for mother to place me in a residential school the following year.

Visiting my sister, Irka

As I was in a residential school run by Christian brothers, Irka was in a convent run by nuns on the other side of town. I had visiting privileges, and was envied by most boys who were interested in girls, and who was not? Every Sunday I would visit my sister, seated in a huge open hall in open view. Irka and I never were great friends. She used to tell on me to my grandmother, for which I got into trouble more times that I care to remember. But during residential school it was different. We were both unhappy, and we cheered up each other. In fact, we started to understand and grow fond of each other.

In school, we went for daily walks and so did the girls at the residential school run by nuns. We boys were led by a Christian brother and the girls were led by a Christian nun. We walked in close formation, under strict supervision. (There was a strict separation between boys and girls). Every Sunday, the two schools attended joint church services, so we knew each other (boys and girls) from a distance. On these daily walks, the two groups would occasionally pass each other. From those infrequent occasions there formed boy-girl attractions. As we passed each other there would be waving of hands and blushing. I guess I was too young to look for a girl, but I was always on the lookout for my sister. Other boys in school often asked me to smuggle secret love letters to other girls in my sister's school. I carried letters between them back-and-forth, without anyone aware of it. This, and the chocolate parcels from my father, earned me some favours with the boys, which in time, made my life somewhat easier.

We would go back to Sulejówek on Christmas and for summer vacations. We both loved going home and the whole year we longed for those times. We would go by train. Mother insisted that I had to travel with my sister and her schoolmates. Imagine going with a bunch of girls! Embarrassing! My sister and other girls would patronize me. Other boys would travel in a separate train wagon. The two groups would eye each other all the way home.

By the way

I have no pictures from Ostrzeszów. That is because my aunt and Uncle Witold never visited us here. They travelled all over Poland, but during these two years, they never came, if only for curiosity. This tells me they really did not care that much. They might have done a lot of good for us

out of a sense of duty, but not out of their hearts.

How do you show love for others and especially for children?

There is a book that speaks of five languages of love. I have it always on my mind and often question my grandchildren and others on what the love languages are.

1. Physical contact – hugging, kissing
2. Words of encouragement
3. Spending time together
4. Doing things for the other person
5. Giving gifts

I added two extra of my own

6. Protection – looking after the other person's safety
7. Discipline – correcting inappropriate behaviour

I love my grandchildren and I want them to know it. I practice all seven languages of love. I love my children too. I love all!

Each person has a unique need for love and if this dominant need is not met, they feel unloved.

We need to ask them "what expression of love do you value most?" In my case it is "spending time together" I am very uncomfortable receiving gifts.

My former pastor mentioned another form of love: "Praying for them." Praying is different. We are talking here of observable acts of love. Ones that the person can observe to know for certain that they are loved. Unless you pray with the person you love, they may never know that you do.

The Bible describes the true nature of love

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Couple of trips we had

I believe it was Easter, 1938 that mother took Irka and me to Poznań (where I was born). We went to the movie "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" a cartoon by Walt Disney in



Mother, aunt, me totally exhausted,
Irka, Basia and her mother

full colour! It was the very first coloured movie I had ever seen and it was an unforgettable experience. I had never seen anything like it. We had seen movies in Sulejówek but they were black and white, silent movies. A lady played a piano while the movie was projected on the screen, with subtitles that you had to read.

The second trip came in 1939, after the end of the school year, just before the outbreak of the war. Mother, her sister Halina, Irka and I, took our very first vacation to a nearby mountain resort "Rabka" in the foothills of the Carpathians Mountains. We were joined by my aunt's friend and her daughter Basia Wilczyńska. The two were

much better off financially than we were, as Basia's father was a dentist technician. I remember she got many more treats than we did.

As I was not fully recovered from my anemia and I found the trip very tiring. We had no money for rides and had to walk everywhere, on steep hills, carrying all our belongings.

A little boy kept coming to the place where we stayed. He was frightened, neglected, and hungry. He showed up every day just at breakfast time and we would talk to him and throw him some food as he would never come near. He seemed to like us and became friendly. One day he did not show up and we never saw him again. We wondered, was he in an abusive home? Did he get beaten up? We wondered about him being abused and felt so sad for his welfare.

Reflection

The two years in a residential school in Ostrzeszów were the most miserable years of my life. Even though it was no more than 300 kilometres from home, mother would come to visit us only once or twice a year. I felt lonely, unloved and forgotten.

In all my childhood, I lived an isolated, uneventful and unguided life. I never went to the seaside, to mountains or visited other cities except for the two trips, in 1938 to Poznań and in 1939 to Rabka. Apart from an immediate family of seven people, I had no close relationships with other adults. Throughout my life I kept away from people in authority or people older than me. This lack of trust, was not good. I missed receiving guidance from people with greater life experience and wisdom than my own.

Why? In my childhood I observed the men in my family and I was not impressed.

My father: he abandoned us. I thought of him as lacking character and being a weakling.

My Grandfather: I loved him, but he had many weaknesses that I did not want in my life.

My Uncle: he was the most reliable and dependable person I knew, but he was emotionally detached and in some way distant. That is not me. I love to express my love.

None of them knew God. I would not trust any of them to give me advice for shaping my life. While in the army, there were only men in my life, and I did not trust them either.

In my book “God’s Leading in My Life” on page 18 I mention

After the death of my mother, at the age of 16, I made resolutions that I tried hard to keep ever since. All was good except that I left out the most important part “to follow Jesus.” That single omission caused me a lot of trouble and eventual separation from God for 40 years of my life.

This omission was partly a result of my religious training which emphasized “loyalty to the church”. I left the Roman Catholic Church, but I never wanted to depart from Jesus and His teaching. In fact that is what appealed to me, not the Church.

We were a middle class family. We had a comfortable lifestyle. By today's standards it was primitive, but no one else we knew was any better off. Mother had well paying job, we were well fed, well provided for, we had two in-house maids. We lived in our own house (our grandparent's) and had a wonderful garden. We children were happy here in our home. But happiness would not last. In the next five years we would be reduced to nothing. I just turned 12 when the war broke out.

Unbeknownst to all of us, these would be the last two years before the war that would change our lives so much. I wonder if we would have lived differently, if we had known? How precious is every moment of our lives. How careful should we be to make each moment count. In a few month all our dreams would be shattered and our relative prosperity would change to outright poverty. Many would perish, years of anguish would follow. Unbeknownst to us, a great day of judgment was on its way in.

CHAPTER 2 - The Second World War

In 1939, when I was 12 years old, WWII broke up. I remember our family gathering around a radio listening to political discussions and speeches. We all knew something unsettling was going on. It was mostly while being home, during a summer break, that those troubling thoughts reached me. During the school year we were sheltered from the outside world and had no idea of anything being wrong. Frankly, at this age, I was not very interested in world affairs anyway.

Historical background - outbreak of World War II (WWII)

1933 - 1945	Germany was under the control of the Nazis, with Hitler having absolute power
1938 March	Hitler invaded Austria and Sudetenland (part of Czechoslovakia)
1939 March	Hitler invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia

Poland, England and France were bound in the Mutual Defense Pact. If one country was attacked the others would immediately counterattack. That way the attacker would be engaged on two fronts, and would be unable to put all its forces against one nation.

1939 September 1 st	Hitler attacked Poland starting World War II
September 3 rd	England and France declared war against Germany but did not attack Germany contrary to the Mutual Defense Pact. As a result Poland had to fight alone.
September 17 th	Soviet Union attacks Poland
September 28 th	Warsaw falls and the Polish Government flees to Rumania
October 6 th	Poland is defeated by the Soviet Union and Germany
October 8 th	Poland is partitioned by Soviet Union and Germany

From an article in the Toronto Star of October 4th there is that quote.

"Poland's supposed allies, Britain and France, had more than five million soldiers poised on the Third Reich's western border, where they outnumbered the Germans by more than four-to-one. They passively watched as the Second Republic fell."

1939 November 30 th	The Soviet Union invades Finland
1940 Spring	Germany captures Denmark and Norway
May	German army overruns Belgium and the Netherlands and captures France
June 22 nd	Hitler attacks the Soviet Union
July – October	The Battle of Britain – military campaign fought entirely in the air
1941 December 7 th	Japan attacks U.S.A. at Pearl Harbor and Germany declares war against U.S.A.
1942 July 4 th	First American combat missions against Germany

By the way

How was Hitler able to build such an enormous war power, in only six years before WWII (1933 – 1939), and this, right after the deep depression of the thirties? Yes, he was printing money, but he also must have received help from the U.S.A. No wonder towards the end of WWII the Allies would no longer bomb German industry, but rather civilian targets - to demoralize the German population. As if the population had anything to do with the war itself.

Just before the war broke out my father paid a visit to Sulejówek to say good-buy. He was called to the army and was on his way to report for duty (as we found out later - to the Eastern Front, where he was eventually captured by the Russians). My father was an officer, a veteran from WWI. There were few generals competing for power after WWI in

Poland. Marshal Pilsucki was the one that came to power. My father happened to serve under General Haller, otherwise he might have pursued a military career. As it was, he went into business instead. I remember that day, coming to our living room and seeing my sister Irka on father's knees, hugging and kissing him. As for me I would not go near him. I was mad that he had left us. I have not seen him in nine years, and at that moment it would be also the last last.



It was from the radio that we learned that Poland had been attacked by the German Armies. Events took place rapidly as armoured columns thrust into Poland. In a matter of days Warsaw was threatened and rumours spread that the Polish Army would defend the River Bug in eastern Poland. The grown ups debated what to do and decided that my mother and aunt would take my sister and me, leave home and try to retreat into safety. We did not realise that as the Germans advanced from the west, soon Russia would attack Poland from the east. There was really

nowhere to go except south, towards Rumania and Hungary, but we did not know it at that time.

Germany and Russia are Poland's neighbours to the west and to the east. Over centuries both countries attacked Poland repeatedly, and until WWI, they had Poland partitioned between themselves for over 150 years. In fact Poland was only reinstated as an independent nation in the brief period between WWI and WWII. What was happening, is that both of these nations were trying to regain control of Poland. Before the war, there was a debate going on among the Polish people, about whether to side with the Germans or the Russians to avoid annihilation. In the end Poland allied with England and France. If anything, Poland feared Russians more than Germans.

By the way

Poles knew what their neighbors were like. From centuries of experience comes this quote "Germany will destroy our body, Russia will destroy our soul". We witnessed the truth of that statement.

During WWII the Nazis had concentration camps and gas chambers, they killed and destroyed mercilessly. However the oppressed would never buy into the doctrine that preached superiority of the German race.

The Russians had labor camps in Siberia, spies and collaborators everywhere. They also had the godless ideology of communism, which could easily attract the naive, idealistic and uninformed. It would strike at the very sole of the nation. That is why under communism, people sought rescue in the Church, as a symbol of protection and an expression of resistance. Under communism the moral fabric of the nation was under attack.

Three weeks as refugees in search of safety

I think the best way to describe these three weeks, at the start of the war, is to quote from a diary of my sister Irena. She wrote them within weeks and months after these events took place. They are far more reliable than my distant memories.

My sister's diary

1939 October 9

The school year is over a long time ago and so is the summer vacation. I was promoted to the third year of high school, even with a good school certificate. In the world however, there are great changes. For two months already there is a turmoil in the world and a very bloody war began. Germans declared war against our country Poland. In a treacherous attack (in fact they did not declare the war but we had to assume so) they occupied our land, by aircraft raids they bombed and destroyed our cities and villages. They did not spare civilians who had no way to protect themselves. Now in Warsaw there are many Germans. Not to long ago, while Warsaw still defended itself, Hitler arrived here so that he could direct the attack personally. He left soon after, we don't know why. Now I have to finish as it gets dark.

1939 November 28

I was going to complete my writing the next day but it so happened that I only do it now. Therefore I will start from the very beginning. Now I am in the high school run by the nuns in Warsaw. All the sisters from the high school in Ostrzeszów are now here. It is surprising that I am here, as I have no idea how it happened. But now I will tell all in the right order.

In the second week of the war, while we had no idea that Germans occupied the greater part of our land (rumours had it that they bridged a narrow corridor and headed for Warsaw) the feeling prevailed as if Warsaw was going to fall into German hands. At home we were all grieved. Mother mentioned something about going away but that's all. On the second day, that is 5th of September, Aunt Halina arrived from Warsaw as she no longer had the nerves to bear the air raids. She brought with her, as usual, a gloomy atmosphere. As at the same day there was an air raid on Sulejów where 16 bombs were dropped, my Aunt advised us to run away to a safer place. Mother agreed, and it was decided to head for Lublin as it is located on the other side of the River Vistula where Germans surely will not advance.

So the next day, early in the morning, we were on our way. First by a horse-drawn buggy to the highway leading to Lublin, and next we were lucky to get a Red Cross flat horse-drawn wagon on the way to Lublin. Thus in the evening of the same day we arrived in Lublin where we headed to father's brother Boleslaw. I will continue tomorrow because now my hand hurts, and I have an interesting book to read.

1940 January 10

That tomorrow was delayed till today 1940 01 10. In 60 years it will be the year 2000, how horrible! I will than be 75, if naturally I will still be alive. I think by than Germans will be buried in ashes and Poland will be large extending from sea-to-sea. Hey, if any

German would know what I am writing, I think I would not see my rosy future. Ahead of me lies the whole life wide open as it is said. I still think I would like to see that distant year 2000. Well Irenko, let me stop fantasising about the future and let me think of the past and the present. I did not finish my writing of 1939 11 28.

By my father's brother Boleslaw, the first day we were received very cordially.

In my book "God's Leading in My Life" on page 14

I describe how we were received there.

The same evening Mother and Aunt went to "Society of refuge care" and rented a room through them. However the next day looking around the neighbourhood, which was constantly under aircraft attack, they changed their mind and looked for another room on their own. We two with Jendrek were extremely bored and felt very odd because as on the previous day we were received pleasantly, on the second day we felt not welcomed. Therefore we felt very uncomfortable in this atmosphere of hostility towards us. We asked Mother and Aunt to move somewhere else.

The same evening I even helped in the search. As we lost all hope of finding a room Aunt Halina found one. Very pleased, the same evening, we moved from our "hospitable" cousins. Next morning we thought our wondering was over. Not so fast! At 10 a.m. we heard sirens for an air raid. We all moved down to the basement, which was a workshop for making clay pots. Suddenly we heard hollow bangs of explosions that drew closer towards us, I froze. Bombs started falling in the garden all around us. Enemy aeroplanes flew low just above rooftops and there were more and more explosions. The house of our cousins was smashed by bombs, everyone in the shelter sobbed and cried. I completely lost control of my senses. Only one person remained cool. It was Jendrek! He was laughing, I really admired him. Jendrek is a child for war. Instead of calming me down he was shouting at me. Just then with the greatest of joy I would beat him up for it. Today, when the danger is over I admire him because there are not many like him. I finish for now as it is dark now and my eyes are poor.

1940 January 31

It so happened that only today I sit down to write these pages of my diary. I have a great desire to finish it today because really it drags on for too long now.

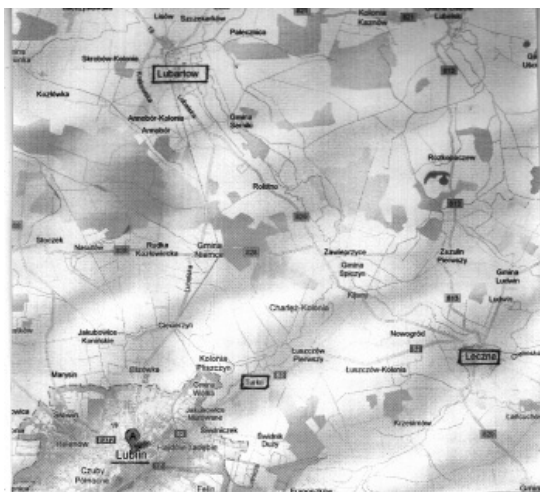


And so let's continue from 1940 01 10.

The next day, after that horrible bombing, was Sunday. I must also add that the whole night I spent lying on a mattress inside our Uncle Bolek's factory. And this was only thanks to mother's intervention as uncle pretended he forgot about us and let us sit till midnight on the stairs from the street entrance. Those few hours that I sat this way I will never forget. The whole Lublin suburb was on fire, the glare of the fire reflected on the dark sky with a horrifying effect. As soon as the first sign of daylight appeared we

started on our way. The heaviest suitcase we left in the factory of Uncle Bolek, which he

reluctantly permitted. As we walked through Lublin we saw the horrible damage after yesterday's bombing. I was so happy that we left Lublin. It did not matter where we went - only away from there where death lurked to take our lives.



We walked two kilometres past Lublin into a village called "Turka". Here we stayed one week. Here too, we had many experiences but it takes too long to write them all. Mother walked every second day to Lublin to do shopping, and at the same time was bringing us the latest news. On the last day, Aunt went to Lublin. Her news was that Lublin was being evacuated to Zamość (SW of Lublin about 80 kilometers away – in hindsight this would be the best way to go - towards Rumania) because a battle was expected.

In view of this news we returned to Lublin, and from there headed along a highway towards Zamość. We found out that this highway was closed by the Polish Army. We were directed instead on a highway to Chelm (east of Lublin about 70 kilometres away – in hindsight that was not a good way – as the Russians later attacked Poland from the east) which we found later was also blocked. As a result we had to walk around a long detour through farmer's fields and wasteland, arriving at a highway leading (unknown to us) to Leczná. We walked along the highway for the next 10 kilometres, and by evening we stopped at a large farm "Długa," where we spend the night. The next morning after breakfast, we were told that the highway would lead us to a village "Leczná" (see map) which it did. Aunt went into the village to inquire if we could rent a horse and buggy to take us to the next village or town. There she was told there was only one destination to go "Leczná" as the other "Lubartów" (see map) was expected to be a battle ground that we should stay away from. Thus we left for "Leczná".

On our way we had such an incident that the mere memory of it brings a chill all over me. As soon as we entered a highway, mother said to me " look Reniu how lucky we are, we have fog (the day was very foggy) that surely no aeroplane will be out today". She did not finish saying it when Jendrek who sat backwards to the horse called these two words: "Mother aeroplane!" and with a lighting speed jumped out of the buggy to hide in a ditch. On his call I turned to look back and saw an aeroplane about 300 metres away flying low about 60 metres diving directly at us. It was a two-engine German bomber. Horrible! So much so, because we were completely helpless. I do not remember how and when I found myself on the ground and next in the ditch. The aeroplane rounded us once, than twice, then a third time but he did not shoot. Nerves were at its highest tension, waiting for a moment that a bullet would penetrate the spine. At last I could hold it no more. I got up from the ditch calling "Oh, I prefer to die hundred times but let this waiting end" My aunt

shouted at me and pulled me down by my coat. At last, the aeroplane left and we approached the wagon where the village boy stood holding the horse by his bridle - he was frozen stiff with fear.

We boarded the buggy and went on our way. Hardly had we gone a few meters and the aeroplane returned. Again we hid in a ditch but this time he left for good. When he passed us, he started to shoot towards a forest where we expected there were camouflaged Polish troops. The rest of way was peaceful. In "Leczna" however we found so many Polish troops that it was too dangerous to stay there. On the way to further villages we found that bridges were down in anticipation of a German attack. As a result we returned to Turka, where we had rented the horse buggy.

We stayed with the farmer close to the highway. We had our own room and we stayed there two weeks. In the meantime Germans occupied Lublin, which unlike Warsaw (which fought back) gave up without a fight (in spite of pamphlets on every street corner calling people to defend the city). Where we were in Turka we were caught in a battle between Polish cavalry and German troops. The Germans won; Polish troops had only a few machine guns, while the Germans had tanks and motorised vehicles. The Germans lost two tanks in spite of their advantage. That whole first day we moved far into the fields and that night we spend in the neighbouring village. Soon after we decided to return to Sulejówek.



We missed home and worried about our grandparents as Warsaw was still under siege by the Germans. One day the farmer's wife took us by horse and buggy to Lublin where for the first time ever we were searched. At first sight of the Germans I began to cry, not caring that they stood close by and looked surprised. From Lublin we started by foot along a highway towards Warsaw. That day we walked 20 kilometres before stopping in Grabów for the night. The next day we resumed walking.



We had luck as we found a horse buggy that took us three kilometres. Next, we found a flat vehicle with pneumatic tires pulled by two horses that stopped near by. In it sat an older gentleman, two drivers and a well-dressed young man. Mother was just about to approach them to ask for a ride when the older man asked "Are you ladies going to Warsaw? We can take you as far as Markuszów." (We suspected they were Polish military men incognito and that they used us to make themselves less suspicious). It ended that when mother paid 10 zloty per person they took us to Warsaw. We were delighted to have a means of transportation.

Note: I made some corrections to the above narrative of my sister as she misspelled town names and confused other minor details



We were travelling through little towns or rather their ruins: Markuszów, Kurów, Ryki etc. (see second map) All were victims of bombing or battles. For instance near Ryki bombers bombed Polish Army troops and left terrible damage. Along the highway lay dead bodies of horses in advanced stage of decay.

Everywhere there were smashed military hardware, guns, vehicles etc. The wind blew papers across the fields, the contents of blown up cash registers. Along the highway and near fields lay abandoned supplies and cargo. And so it was all along the way. Once we passed through a forest and saw the unburied body of a dead woman. It was all so horrible and sad.

At the end however, we got back home and found grandmother and grandfather safe and sound. With them were two friends of our aunt. We learned that our grandparents had also had some adventures, especially grandfather, whom the Germans took with other men and marched as far as Rembertów, where they set him free.

This ends my sister's memories of the first days of war. What follows are memories of school, friends etc.

What I translated above was written within months of these events. Some details I never remembered and at the same time I have other memories of my own impressions that I will describe on the following pages. What my sister described is true. There is only so much you can write. I will highlight therefore those events that are engraved in my own memory.

Lack of anti-aircraft defences during the 1939 campaign

Days before the outbreak of war, a strange thing took place. My sister, who was 14 at the time, met a young Polish fighter pilot. The young man fell in love with her. He told us that he had been ordered to fly to England. He promised my sister to come back and marry her. He never did.

Apparently all personnel and equipment from the air force, navy, government, gold reserves and many rich people left Poland and headed for Romania or England. Obviously they found resisting Nazi forces was hopeless. Consequently the whole air space over Poland was undefended, making it doubly hard for the Polish forces on the ground to resist Nazi attack.

Refugees fleeing the approaching German Army.

There was an expectation that if attacked Warsaw would fight back. As the front line approached, thousands of civilians fled



the capital towards the east. The main highway to Lublin was overcrowded. People walked, rode bicycles, in horse-drawn carriages, cars and trucks. We joined that exodus of humanity, ill-prepared and uninformed. We carried suitcases; backpacks would have served us far better. Our footwear were not suitable for a long hike; we had never walked that far carrying a heavy load, and we soon tired out.

Accident

I vividly remember - on the way to Lublin - a convertible automobile approaching us from behind. Suddenly the front wheel got a puncture from all that debris that covered the pavement. The car swerved from the road into a ditch and smack into a tree. I still remember the four occupants being thrown straight up and out. Our vehicle just kept going, nobody else stopped. Just another casualty of the war.

By uncle Boleslaw in Lublin

Uncle's wife, I forgot her name, was very fat and as she moved around all that flesh bounced. Irka and I, just between ourselves, called her "Aunt yellow." They had a son, also named Andrew, who was a year younger than me, but big for his age and also heavy. I don't remember playing with him, as the whole family acted strangely towards us. Strangely enough, years later, he and my other cousin, Wojciech, were asking themselves why I did not contact them. After such a reception, why would I? Anyway, they knew how to contact me, through my sister and later my aunt.

The air raid in Lublin

My sister describes the Saturday bombing that we hid in the basement. That basement, was full of shelves loaded with half-finished pottery. People crowded inside like sardines. It was thought that a basement was a safe place when in fact you could be buried alive there. As there were no trenches in the garden we had little choice but to stay there. The bombing got real nasty with explosions very close by. Women and children were screaming, clay pots were falling and clouds of dust added to the confusion. My aunt became hysterical. It was a zoo. My laughter was just a different way of expressing fear; I was glad to get out of there. It was too close a call.

I remember, as we emerged from that dusty basement, we could see bomb craters in the garden within meters of where we had been hiding. Adjoining our building, across a

driveway was Uncle Boleslaw's apartment. The external wall was down, with all the furniture there in plain view, just like in a dollhouse. We thought that that was his punishment for being so mean to us.

On the battlefield.

As my sister describes it, we were caught on a battlefield smack between the German and Polish forces. This was in Turka close to Lublin. We had to travel all this way in search of safety only to land in the worst spot imaginable. The two forces were exchanging artillery fire, and it was not safe to stay around the farm buildings, so we went into the fields looking for a low spot to dig into and for some bushes to use as cover. We stayed around a small stream and from our position could observe both sides. There were occasional reflections of binocular glasses that signalled military presence. Occasionally we saw German tanks on one side and troop movements on the other. The artillery exchange lasted the whole day with some shells falling close to us. By the mid-afternoon we were hungry. Mother said "shells or no shells I am going to the farm to cook a soup". I walked her over a single-board stream-crossing (which she was afraid to cross alone) and then returned to my sister and aunt. My aunt was a real coward. She cried and despaired while we tried to stay calm. In a few hours, mother returned with a big pot of soup and some spoons. I quickly run to take her over the stream and we sat around the pot eating. We had no plates so we had to just eat from the pot. My aunt refused to eat; she was petrified of the shelling, which was getting really close. We ate as much as we could. When some shells fell so close to us that we had dirt falling all around us, we left the pot of soup and crawled over to what looked like a safer area. After a while we thought it was safe to return to our pot of soup. As we approached it, we noticed a big dog lapping up what was left of the soup. We laughed at our aunt; she never got to taste it.



We remained in the fields till nightfall. At dusk the Polish cavalry attacked German positions, swords against guns, horses against tanks. (Naturally the Polish cavalry attacked artillery and infantry positions not tanks)

It was a sorry sight. They got gunned down before they could even reach the

Germans. The battle was lost. Polish troops retreated. Fighting ceased. We returned to the village with the unforgettable memory of a cavalry charge, fallen soldiers and horses, and a cascade of exploding shells, gunfire and the horror of war.

The way home

When I saw my aunt in 1995, she accused mother of leaving her alone on the highway to Warsaw while we and her suitcase travelled on a flat car pulled by two horses. I was surprised to hear it as I had no memory of this episode at all. I also noticed that my sister does not mention it either. Could it be that she was making it up? I have no idea. On the other hand Aunt Halina was in the habit of wandering around looking for information. It

could have happened that the driver took off and would not stop when mother wanted to wait for our aunt. We will never know. If my aunt's accusation is true, that would only reflect on the tension between her and my mother. Mother was five years older and their characters were very different. I don't know what it was, but there was some bitterness between them.

The way home - through all the damaged villages and towns - was a very depressing journey. Every way you looked there were ruins, fires, discarded equipment and flying papers. There were no human corpses, as they must have been buried. Intense air bombing caused most of the damage. There was very little air defence, so German planes could fly low and hit accurately. Polish airspace was totally under their control; there was no anti-aircraft defence seen anywhere. Later we found out that the entire Polish Air Force had left for England. Later, Polish fighter pilots distinguished themselves in the Battle of Britain. One wonders why Germans had to use so much force to subdue ill-equipped Polish forces, why they bombed civilian population, which did nothing to resist the invasion. They were not just taking over the territory, they had an intense hatred and a will to destroy.

Historical Background - 1939 campaign statistics

Germany had a substantial numerical advantage over Poland and the advantage of surprise attack.

	German Forces	Polish Forces	Soviet Forces
<i>Armour</i>			
<i>Divisions:</i>	60	39 (some incomplete)	33
<i>Guns:</i>	9,000	4,300	4,959
<i>Tanks:</i>	2,750	880	4,736
<i>Aircraft</i>	2,315	400	3,300
<i>Losses</i>			
<i>Dead</i>	16,343	66,000	1,475
<i>Wounded</i>	27,640	133,700	2,383
<i>Captured</i>		694,000	

Aircraft played a major role in the campaign.

Bombers also attacked cities, causing huge losses amongst the civilian population through terror bombing. The Luftwaffe forces (German Air Force) consisted of 1,180 fighter aircraft, 290 Ju 87 Stuka dive bombers, 1,100 conventional bombers (mainly He 111s and Dornier Do 17s), and an assortment of 550 transport and 350 reconnaissance aircraft. In total, Germany had close to 4,000 aircraft, most of them modern. A force of 2,315 aircraft was assigned to Weiss. Due to its prior participation in the Spanish Civil War, the Luftwaffe was probably the most experienced, best trained and best equipped air force in the world in 1939.

The Polish Air Force lacked modern fighter aircraft, but its pilots were among the world's best trained, as proven a year later in the Battle of Britain, in which the Poles played a major part

The Polish Army had approximately a million soldiers, but less than half of them were mobilized by 1 September 1. Latecomers sustained significant casualties when public transport became targets of the Luftwaffe. The Polish military had fewer armored forces than the Germans, and these units, dispersed within the infantry, were unable to effectively engage the enemy

Spiritual lesson

Poland was defeated in the 1939 campaign. Eventually it lost the war after 1945. Why? Poland put her trust on alliances with England and France. She had the Mutual Defence Pact with both of these countries that stipulated if one was attacked the other two would respond in counterattack.

In 1939 England and France declared war on Germany, but did not attack. This way, Germany could use all its forces against Poland alone.

In 1945 Our Allies abandoned Eastern Europe leaving it to Russian domination.

The Bible warns us not to put our trust in men

Psalm 20:7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

37:3 Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

118:8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.

Isaiah 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD.

Poland was badly let down by the Allies. Together with the rest of Eastern Europe it lost the war. It suffered from having one oppressor (the Nazis) only to suffer under another, even more sinister (Russia). The Allies did not even negotiate Russia's exit strategy. Russia was free to do as they pleased.

What is the lesson? Instead of putting its trust in alliances, a better strategy is to rule justly, practice righteousness and trust in God.

Returning to Sulejówek

After three weeks of living as refugees, we were happy to come back home. Here we found some changes too. We found two visitors staying with our grandparents, two older ladies (distant relatives of my grandfather) who sought refuge from the battle in Warsaw.

The city of Warsaw was under siege, with fierce fighting taking place in resistance to the attacking Nazi forces. Warsaw offered resistance, unlike Prague, Paris and many other capital cities. The Poles fought, from September 8 to 28, even though poorly equipped and outnumbered. Eventually, after 20 days of fighting, Warsaw capitulated, badly damaged, all communications disrupted, roads damaged, homes destroyed. My Uncle Witold took part in the defense of Warsaw (he managed to avoid being captured by the Nazis and was able to live a relatively normal life during the Nazi occupation of Poland). Warsaw however suffered a lot of damage as a result of the fighting.

Our grandfather had his own adventure story to share. Once the Nazi forces arrived in Sulejówek, they rounded up all the men and walked them 18 kilometres to Rembertów, where most of the captives were released. Grandfather, in his 70's, was proud to be able to complete this march. He told us about our neighbor, Szymański, a big, heavy man, who all through that march whined and begged to be released. He brought shame on all of them by being such a coward. You can imagine after this incident Szymański, lost the respect of the other men in our community. By the way, he was the father of my close friend.

Those two months of war were just the beginning of the brutality of a nation, which

claimed to be civilised and know God. Concentration camps, execution of innocent civilians and other acts of violence followed. The next five years we would face hunger and poverty. Our short-lived prosperity ended. Good-buy innocence, welcome reality.

This winter was extremely cold and the weather brought more hardship on the exhausted and defeated population. But life went on. One-by-one, services got restored and things returned to normal, except for the fact that our enemy ruled over us.



After the fall of Warsaw, on October 1st, the Germans organized a military parade so as to display their superior power and to humiliate the Polish population.



Hitler was there to inspect his victorious troops

Spiritual lesson - the right to defend yourself - to fight or not to fight?

The Bible does not directly forbid self-defense as long as we do not use excessive force. The first choice should always be negotiating peace, but if this fails consider

your chances of winning. It seems to me that the Polish Government did not believe they could win. They did not believe they could negotiate either.

Luke 14:31 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?"

32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

There is a puzzling message from Jesus that suggests defense is justified under some conditions.

Luke 22:36 He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one."

Matthew 26:51 With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

52 *"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword."*

“for all who draw the sword will die by the sword” - true, but some things are worth dying for (our faith, family, freedom). Jesus himself died for our sins. There is yet another verse

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

To me this verse suggests that husbands should be willing to protect their wives with their lives. I elaborate on this topic because there is so much controversy about it. You could quote verses to the contrary. What is right? I don't know, but I feel it in my heart that some things are worth fighting for. I leave it to your own judgment.

Preparations made for eventual defeat

During the war, the old city and the royal castle in Warsaw were completely destroyed. Yet after the war all was restored to its original state. How? Apparently Warsaw architectural students photographed and sketched every detail of the buildings, which they later hid from being captured.

Many valuable paintings in museums, were removed from their frames, rolled and hid in a safe place. Even some monuments were buried in the ground and preserved through the war years.

Some military units buried arms and ammunition underground for later use of partisan activities. Many military personnel never surrendered to the enemy, but managed to change into civilian clothes and escape being captured as prisoners of war. Later they organized themselves into the Polish resistance movement (AK) under the command of the exiled Polish Government in London, England



Under the German occupation (1939 Sept – 1945 Jan) 5 years and 4 months

After Germany and the Soviet Union partitioned Poland in 1939, most of the ethnically Polish territory ended up under the control of Germany. This territory was divided as follows.

1. In October 1939, Germany directly annexed those former Polish territories along German's eastern border: *Annexed territories: West Prussia, Poznań, Upper Silesia, and the former Free City of Danzig (Gdańsk). The area of these annexed territories was 94,000 square kilometres and the population was about 10 million, the great majority of whom were Poles. During the war, nearly one million Poles were expelled from this German-ruled area, while 600,000 Germans from Eastern Europe and 400,000 from the German Reich were settled there. In the Annexed territories, all Poles were to be eventually expelled and replaced by Germans.*

2. *General Governorship: the remainder of German-occupied Poland (including the cities of Warsaw, Kraków, Radom, and Lublin) was organized as the so-called*

General Governorship under a civilian governor general, the Nazi party lawyer Hans Frank. Here a remnant of the Polish population would remain for the time being.



Hans Frank was captured by American troops in May 1945 and was one of the defendants at the Nuremberg Trials. He was found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity and on 1 October 1946 he was sentenced to death by hanging.

For the Polish people, living conditions in these two zones were totally different. I lived in the second zone.

What follows is an extract from the Internet describing events that took place after the fall of Poland to the Nazis. Why do I quote them? Because what follows reflects exactly what I believe and agree with, to this very day. This is what we Poles witnessed, read of, heard rumors of, and believed.

Nazi plan for the conquered territories in the East

“General plan East”, was the Nazi’s grand plan for ethnic cleansing of these territories, it had two parts:

“Small Plan,” which covered actions that were to be taken during the war.

In 10 years’ time (did the Nazis believe it would take that long to conquer the whole world?), the plan called for the extermination, expulsion, enslavement or Germanisation of most or all Poles and East Slavs still living behind the front line. Instead, 250 million Germans would live in an extended Lebensraum (“living space”) of the 1000-Year Reich (1000-Year German Empire)

By 1952, only three to four million Poles were supposed to be left residing in the former Poland, and then only to serve as slaves for German settlers. They were to be forbidden to marry, the existing ban on any medical help to Poles in Germany would be extended, and eventually Poles would cease to exist

“Big Plan,” which covered actions to be undertaken after the war was won.

Fifty years after the war, the plan foresaw the eventual expulsion and extermination of more than 50 million Slavs beyond the Ural Mountains.

In other words after the extermination of the Jews, Slavs were next!



In 1939, right after the invasion of Poland, the Nazis started implementing their plans. Tens of thousands of wealthy landowners, clergymen, and members of the intelligentsia – government officials, teachers, doctors, dentists, officers, journalists, and others (both Poles and Jews) – were either murdered in mass executions or sent to prisons and concentration camps.

In an action code named “Operation Tannenberg,” in September and October 1939, an estimated 760 mass executions were carried out by Einsatzkommandos, resulting in the deaths of at least 20,000 of the most prominent Polish citizens.

Proscription lists identified more than 61,000 Polish activists, intelligentsia, actors, former officers, etc. who were to be interned or shot. Members of the German minority living in Poland assisted in preparing the lists.

In the spring and summer of 1940, more than 30,000 Poles were arrested by the German authorities of German-occupied Poland. Several thousand university professors, teachers, priests, and others were shot outside Warsaw, in the Kampinos forest near Palmiry, and inside the city at the Pawiak prison. Most of the remainder were sent to various German concentration camps.

Under the Soviet Occupation (1939 Sept – 1941 Summer) about two years.
After 1941 these territories were occupied by the Germans. In 1944 the Russians returned.

After Germany and the Soviet Union partitioned Poland in 1939, the Soviets controlled most of the non-ethnic Polish population (Ukrainians in the south and Belarusians in the north). The Soviet Union had taken over 52.1 percent of the territory of Poland (~200,000 square kilometres), with over 13,700,000 people. 38 percent Poles (~5.1 million), 37 percent Ukrainians, 14.5 percent Belarusians, 8.4 percent Jews, 0.9 percent Russians and 0.6 percent Germans.

Soviet terror in the occupied eastern Polish lands was as cruel and tragic as were the Nazis in the west. Soviet authorities brutally treated those who might oppose their rule, deporting by November 10, 1940, around 10 percent of the total population of Kresy, thirty percent of those deported were dead by 1941. They arrested and imprisoned about 500,000 Poles from 1939–1941, including former officials, officers, and natural “enemies of the people,” like the clergy, but also noblemen and intellectuals. The Soviets also executed about 65,000 Poles. Soldiers of the Red Army and their officers behaved like conquerors, looting and stealing Polish treasures. When Stalin was told about it, he answered: “If there is no ill will, they (the soldiers) can be pardoned.”

In one notorious massacre, the NKVD - the Soviet secret police—systematically executed 21,768 Poles, among them 14,471 former Polish officers, including political leaders, government officials, and intellectuals. Some 4,254 of these were uncovered in mass graves in Katyn Forest by the Nazis in 1943 (my father’s body was among those uncovered). The Nazis invited an international group of neutral representatives and doctors to study the corpses and confirm Soviet guilt, but the findings from the study were denounced by the Allies as “Nazi propaganda.”

The Soviet Union had ceased to recognize the Polish state at the start of the 1939

invasion. As a result, the two governments never officially declared war on each other. The Soviets therefore did not classify Polish military prisoners as prisoners of war but as rebels against the new legal government of Western Ukraine and Western Belaruse. The Soviets killed tens of thousands of Polish prisoners of war. Some, like General Józef Olszyna-Wilczyński, who was captured, interrogated and shot on 22 September, were executed during the campaign itself. On 24 September, the Soviets killed 42 staff and patients of a Polish military hospital in the village of Grabowiec, near Zamość. The Soviets also executed all the Polish officers they captured after the Battle of Szack, on 28 September. Over 20,000 Polish military personnel and civilians perished in the Katyn massacre (My father died here).

The exile Polish Government in London, England and the Soviets re-established diplomatic relations in 1941, following the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement; but the Soviets broke them off again in 1943 after the Polish government demanded an independent examination of the recently discovered Katyn burial pits. The Soviets then lobbied the Western Allies to recognize the pro-Soviet Polish puppet government of Wanda Wasilewska in Moscow.

At this point the quotation ends.

In conclusion: Both the Germans and the Russians continued the same policies against Poles that they did before 1918. (During the 1773 - 1918 partition of Poland). If anything these policies of extermination were vastly accelerated.

Spiritual lesson - Depravity of man

What I am presenting here is what I witnessed and grew up under - it left a lasting impression on me' These were terrible things, but nothing new. Today, and in the past and as far back as you can see, similar cruelty takes place all over the world. This is a tale of human depravity. If you have any illusions about the goodness of man - look around!

For this reason, and because of my own witnessing of such brutality, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind about the total depravity of human nature, right from birth. But what frightens me most is that I recognize I am not any better. I know deep inside of me, there are thoughts and impulses, which could lead me that way. The reason I did not ever consider such depravity an option, is because of the Christian moral training I received. I observed others, no different than me, choosing to go that route.

<i>Genesis 6:5</i>	<i>The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.</i>
<i>Jeremiah 17:9</i>	<i>The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?</i>
<i>Matthew 12:45</i>	<i>..... That is how it will be with this wicked generation." - Jesus words</i>
<i>15:19</i>	<i>For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.</i>

The question to ask then is "Does it mean that Germans and Russians are so bad?" Absolutely not! The ordinary people are no different than you and me. They are caught in the same trap as we all are. The people in power, the government policies and national ambitions are something else.

In fact the ordinary peace-loving people in any nation are sandwiched between two layers. If they represent 80 percent of the population, then for the purpose of illustration, the remaining 20 percent is

split as follows:

10 percent are of the ruling layer representing people in positions of power (the wealthy, the influential, bankers, businessmen, lawyers, judges, government elite, the military, economists, planners, etc.). It is not to deny that in this group there are many honest and well-meaning individuals, but among them there are also, many ruthless, greedy, power hungry individuals who have no regard for justice or law. They play according to the rules, within the letter of the law. If anything, they corrupt the law to create loopholes that make the legal system cumbersome and costly to the poor. The rich buy their way out of trouble.

James 2:6 But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?

By contrast God's law given to Israelites was simple

Deuteronomy 19:21 Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

By the way, this command was given to the judicial system, never to the individual! What it means is that no punishment will exceed the offense committed, thus stopping excessive punishment such as torture. Oh yes - death penalty for crime is authorized (never for political, religious or any other convictions). Who do you think removed it? Not the Church! Secular authorities. Guess why? Self-protection, so that evil can no longer be eradicated. This abolition made our judicial system toothless - cancer must be cut out permanently.

Romans 13:2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

3 *For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.*

4 *For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*

In the book of Deuteronomy, seven times God commanded Israel: **"You must purge the evil from among you."**

10 percent is the criminal element representing the crime scene, those engaged in all kinds of illegal activities, those who use brute force, extortion, and who disregard the law of the land. Here, too, they act either individually or as part of organized crime groups.

These two minority groups are those from which the Nazis and the Soviets drew their support. Actual percentages vary in different countries. The three groups overlap and sometimes it is not clear who belongs to which group, but in general the principle is true. It is true in any culture and in any human endeavor.

The ordinary people had little to do with injustices committed during WWII. If anything, they too became victims. They were bullied and frightened by those in power. In fact they were bombed by the opposing forces, dislocated, hungered, brutalized, raped and robbed as war fortunes changed. Husbands and sons were drafted to the army to be killed, wounded or taken as prisoners of war and separated for years from their families. In today's warfare, the civilian population suffers as much or even more than the military. They pay a high price for their silence and neutrality.

Question

Are the ordinary people, the peace-loving, silent majority, as represented here as 80 percent of population blameless? Not entirely. We are the ones who let the minority into power. At some point in our history, we failed to stand for the law and justice. We were cowards!

That is why I believe, that the Church is dead wrong when it distances itself from the rest of the community. We are the light in the world. We need to speak for justice, for peace, compassion, love. What better way is to do it than by being present at all levels of our community? In business, in government, in education, sports - everywhere! The Church is dead wrong when it discourages Christians from higher education, or when it is silent about elections. We need to bring nonbelievers to the knowledge of Christ. We need to speak up and face criticism and persecution as a result. We need to practice what we believe. We need to end religiosity and stop being cowardly!

From my own memories of those years

The first thing the Germans did in occupied Poland, was to confiscate all bicycles and radios. We had to surrender both, which is why it comes to my mind first. I lost my bike! They imposed quotas on farmers to deliver each year a specified number of tonnes of wheat, potatoes, etc. They issued identity cards to all, imposed curfew for leaving home, and added endless rules and regulations. Food was rationed so that any surplus was used to feed the German armies. Jews were isolated into ghettos. In the western part of Poland the population was being gradually displaced by Germans and moved to homes vacated by the Jews in central Poland. Here an army of German police and officials moved in confiscating private homes. Another army of spies and traitors infiltrated all ranks of Polish society.

We kids would often go to the railway lines, some 200 meters south of us. Close to us was a railway signal and many trains slowed down or outright stopped here. Germans were moving troops and supplies, in great numbers, to the eastern border with Russia. We would talk to the German soldiers and try to get things from them, not because we really needed them, but it was a sort of game. Our favourite line was “Cigaretten fur Vatter” We would occasionally get some cigarettes and that is how I tried to smoke. I did not like smoking though, so I stopped.

When trains loaded with goods would stop, under the cover of the night, some grown-ups would jump on the wagon and throw down lumps of coal, then jump off before the train gained too much speed. Behind us, to the south, lived a family, by the name Gliniski. They were a black sheep family in our neighbourhood. The father was a drunk, who would beat his wife and two boys, when under the influence of alcohol. The older boy was hardly ever home and he was in trouble with the police. The younger, Geniek, about 18, was really a good boy, friendly and fun to be with. He used to jump the trains and bring home coal. One night he got shot by the train guard, fell down from the wagon onto the rails. The moving train cut both his legs off. He crawled in the darkness towards his home and died on the way from loss of blood.

Jews were initially confined to small towns, such as Miłosna, one kilometre east of us. In time these towns were emptied as the Germans brought the Jews into Warsaw Ghetto. To make room, rail transports from the ghetto would carry loads of Jews to concentration camps for labour and for gas chambers. The fate of the Jews was well known to all Poles.



Germans marching a column of Jews for a work assignment



Nazis liked to humiliate Jews. Here an SS man cuts off a beard of a rabbi

By the way

No one in Poland would ever doubt the Holocaust. The Nazis built many concentration camps in Poland. They brought Jews from all over Poland to these camps, and their fate could not be hidden. They were mass murdered in gas chambers and their bodies cremated. People knew what was going on. We all knew it. Many Polish people ended up in concentration camps, witnessed what was going on and leaked this information to the outside world. The fear was that after the Jews were exterminated, the Poles would be next.

The Catholic Church was strangely silent about the slaughter of the Jews. The Vatican was very vulnerable; Italy under Mussolini was fascist and working hand-in-hand with Hitler. Any criticism of the Nazis could produce retaliation, and the Church was protecting billions of dollars of art, documents and real estate. They would not risk losing those. Jesus warned us about the dangers of wealth.

Matthew 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

8:20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

After the war, the Catholic Church apologised for their silence, however I am convinced that it would do the same again rather than loose its treasures.

Jewish population in Poland

There always was tension between the Polish and Jewish population in Poland. Jews were in Poland as the Amish are in Canada. They would not assimilate with the Polish population – they lived a different life. Consequently there was a lot of mistrust on both sides. Most of these Jewish communities were very poor and engaged in trades of all kinds (tailors, bakers, shoemakers, shopkeepers, etc.) Many educated Jews lived in cities, were engaged in professions (lawyers, doctors, dentists, businessmen, bankers, money lenders, etc.). Educated Jews lived mostly secular lives, some accepted the Roman Catholic religion. They had a significant influence in Polish politics and in the economy. The close cooperation among Jews internationally, gave them significant bargaining power. A

lot of businesses in Poland were dominated by Jews. (As an example, when my father opened a new business in Wilno, he received three year free from paying taxes. Why? The Jewish dominated competition in Wilno, they would lower prices to prevent any Polish enterprise from entering the market).

To illustrate the type of tensions between the two groups, let me recall two stories I heard personally.

My great-grandmother died in her house when it was set on fire, suspected to have been started by Jews (I do not know if there was conviction in her case) there is a suspicion that my great-grandparents could not repay a debt.

In Toronto I met a Jewish man who shared with me that as he was in his youth in Poland, he and his Jewish friends would go around and beat up Poles. (No doubt Poles did the same to Jews)

What happened during World War II

Germans persecuted Jews and killed them in gas chambers in concentration camps.

All nationalities (Germans, Poles, etc.) were sent to concentration camps, but to my knowledge, only Jews ended in the gas chambers.

Russians favoured Jews. The head of NKWD (Secret Police) was a Jew. When Russians came to Gottingen, my wife remembers that most officers were Jews and certainly the political officers were Jews. In 1939 when Russians occupied Eastern Poland, Jews collaborated with the Russians, denouncing many Polish families who ended up in Siberia.

To resume my story, as these little towns emptied of their Jewish inhabitants, Germans were bringing in Polish families from the west of Poland. Their plan was to replace the Polish population there with Germans so as to solidify their claim that the west of Poland was theirs. Fortunately after the war, this process was reversed, otherwise their scheme would have succeeded.

By the way

Zig's grandfather was moved to Poland from Rumania, and was given five Polish farms as his own. One Polish family (the former owners) worked on the farm as labourers. Zig's dad recalled that as a young lad, he would teach math to the Polish kids, as they were not allowed to attend school. The Polish kids would teach him to speak Polish in return.

As a consequence of the war, shopping became a nightmare with lines as long as three hours waiting for bread, meat, etc. You had to get up early in the morning and wait in a line-up hoping supplies do not run out before your turn. Streetcars were overflowing with people standing on steps, hanging on to bumpers, between cars, standing on wheel hubs. Electricity was on only at certain times of the day. To light the rooms we used a variety of lamps (naphtha, carbide, etc.). Wages were frozen and costs skyrocketed. People started selling their personal possessions just to go on living. A black market developed with farmers having the upper hand, trading food for goods. Soon you could find a grand piano in a farmer's barn.

I know that mother made frequent trips to nearby farm villages, bartering our possessions in exchange for food. She was not well, (two years later she would die of cancer). She looked very tired and neglected, and I am now ashamed to admit that I was ashamed of her. She worked at a full time job in accounts, run an underground AK hospital and tried everything for our survival. I was very, very foolish.



In Sulejówek things changed. Irka and I were in schools in Warsaw. Mother could no longer commute to work from there and now lived in Ożarów, in a one-room close to her work. Our grandparents lived alone, visited infrequently by mother, but more often by Aunt Halina. Grandfather was sick with asthma and unable to look after the garden. They had no more domestic help. I think the last time we visited Sulejówek was in 1940. Furniture and other possessions were gradually sold on the black market for food. In January 1942, grandfather died at the age of 74. Grandmother rented out the house, with the help of my aunt, and moved to live with my mother in a rented apartment in Włochy west of Warsaw, and closer to mother's work.

By the way

There is no doubt in my mind that smoking is deadly. Grandfather could have lived longer if he had not smoked. He died a horrible death, grasping for air, like drowning. It troubles me that so many young people today are foolish enough to start smoking.

Our neighbour's son, Zdzisław Cićkiewicz (who rented two rooms and a kitchen in our Sulejówek's house), complained about a leaky roof and demanded repairs. We had a brand new, metal roof done just before the war and it was thought to be indestructible. Apparently the roof was punctured by gunfire at the start of war. We were penniless, and this was a big expense. I think Aunt Halina paid the bill.

During these hard war years it was my Aunt Halina who selflessly and industrially kept us all going, taking charge of all business matters and showing wisdom and great organisational skills. Who would have thought that this moody and somewhat spoiled person would be such a pillar of strength. Through it all she suffered mental problems. She has been a challenge to live with, often hysterical, moody, critical and complaining yet when the chips were down, she came through. Let God have mercy on her troubled soul.

Where the Nazis and Soviets met.

The German and Russian armies stopped at the river Bug, after they attacked Poland in 1939. Both sides were moving troops into that frontier, as neither trusted the other. Later Germans attacked Russia and from then on, Poland was the main supply route to the eastern front. Polish partisans caused train derailments, cut communication lines and created trouble behind German lines. In return, Germans burned villages where they suspected support for partisan activity. The Ukrainian SS, under German command, killed and raped a lot of civilians and destroyed many villages.

Initially, as German troops advanced into Russia, thousands of Russian soldiers surrendered so as to escape the oppressive communist system. Instead of welcoming the Russians, the Germans put them into camps where they were died from hunger and cold. Russian prisoners of war were kept in the open fields without any protection against the weather. I saw transports of Russian prisoners of war passing through Warsaw. They had faces swollen from hunger. The word came back to Russia, and Russians stopped surrendering, and instead fought hard against the Nazis.

By the way

The Soviet Union is made up of regions of different ethnicity and language, kept in line by a dictatorial central government. Most of these people would have preferred to exist as independent nations and are anxious to escape communist control. To most of them, the Russian language is their second language. Within the Soviet Union there are frequent regional wars, which are resolved by brutal force.

Some of the Russians who surrendered formed Russian troops fighting on the side of the Germans (Wuasov army). These troops also committed crimes against civilian populations and after the war were sent by the Allies back to Russia. Rumour had it that Communist authorities had them all executed as traitors.

With the eastern front becoming the major battlefield, I saw troops of all kinds passing through Warsaw. Hungarian and Italian armies, German troops and SS troops full of other nationalities fighting on the German side. We saw tanks and guns shipped by rail to the Eastern front. The extremely long frontier demanded massive amounts of supplies, so train after train travelled eastward through Poland. Empty trains brought topsoil from Ukraine, which was known for its fertile fields. This injustice was carried out against a nation that was fighting on the German side! The soil was never returned and will benefit Germans for generations to come. The worst fear a German soldier had, was to be shipped to the eastern front. The cold weather, inadequate supplies and vast terrain full of Russian partisans made it a feared destination.

Around 1942 German army made a fearful discovery. In Katyn they found mass graves of Polish officers and intelligentsia murdered by the Russians. To discredit the Russians and to get the support of the Polish population, the German authorities publicised this cruel discovery extensively. They invited the Red Cross to inspect the graves, and published the names of those buried there in Polish newspapers. We never found the name of our father, so for years after the war we assumed he was buried where he had fallen in battle. It was in 1999 on my trip to Lublin that I found out that father had been killed there. The Polish officers were in barracks and each night, NKWD (Russian secret police) would take a group of about 20, by truck to the nearby forest and shot them with a pistol in the back of a head. Some accounts list as many as 40 000 bodies buried there.

As the war progressed, German troops suffered defeats and began to retreat. We hoped the Russians would not push them back too close to Poland. We also hoped that at the end of the war it would be Allied forces that would free Poland from Nazi oppression, and not the

Russians. In the end, Western aid tipped the scales in the Russians' favour. And, unknown to us, Western powers gave future control of Poland (for after the war) to the Russians - our worst fear, one which resulted in 45 years of communist rule and 50 years of oppression in Poland.

Historical background

At the Tehran Conference (Nov-Dec 1943) the Great powers (Great Britain, U.S.A. and the Soviet Union) agreed to shift Polish borders on both sides, cut in the east and add in the west.

At the Yalta Conference (Feb 1945), the Great powers (Great Britain, U.S.A. and the Soviet Union) divided postwar Europe between each other, handing over their East European Allies into the hands of the Soviets. Why? By that time Soviet Union already occupied this territory and outnumbered the Allied forces three to one - the Allies had little negotiating power and no desire to confront their "Ally".

When Great Britain and the U.S.A. got the Soviet Union to join their forces - they made a pact with a devil. It was only after the war that they realized the evil they were dealing with. The Allies then started frantic efforts to build defenses and acquire nuclear missiles, ushering in the cold war. The West made it. Too bad for Eastern Europe!



Bielany

From the age of 12 to 16, I was in a Catholic Residential School in Warsaw, where I completed my secondary education. I was happy to be in a safe environment and able to study while on the outside, things were pretty grim. In the beginning mother paid the fees, but as time went on I became a welfare case. The priests had pity on mother and let me attend school for free. It was

humiliating. The same was true for my sister whom mother placed in a school for girls in a convent run by nuns. Being in Warsaw, some weekends we were able to visit mother at first in Sulejówek and later at my aunt's apartment in Warsaw.

The school building was on the outskirts of Warsaw where heavy fighting took place during the siege of Warsaw. The building was damaged by bullets and artillery shells. One wing of the building was burned to the ground. Half of the remaining building was taken by the German Army and used as sleeping quarters for soldiers. Our classes were on the other side of the corridor, facing the rooms occupied by the soldiers. They were Bavarian troops on bicycles. They smoked cigars and the smell filled the corridor and our classrooms. Later these rooms were returned to the school. The German soldiers were Roman Catholics and friendly towards us. There was peaceful co-existence.



Outside the school building there was always a German guard on duty. When my grandfather died, I wore a black band on my arm, which was customary for Catholics who were grieving a deceased family member. The German guard called me and asked for the meaning of the band. I told him, and he sympathised with me, a kind reaction on his part.

There were no bad feelings between us. The soldiers were friendly and at first they often played with us.

In the Fall of 1939, work crews dug out bodies of those killed in the siege of Warsaw and transferred them to cemeteries. What a terrible stink! There were hundreds of bodies both Polish and German, buried wherever they had fallen in the wooded area around the school grounds. We were glad when it was over. Later in 1943 during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, dozens of Jewish bodies were washed out from the storm sewers into the river Vistula. Many landed on sand banks, naked bodies of men and women alike. As we schoolboys, were walking on the banks of the river we could see these bodies. A reminder once again of the horrors of war.

Bielany was a gymnasium run by the Roman Catholic brothers and had a normal program of Math, Polish, Latin, History, Geography, etc. We studied the German language at school. Unfortunately, in my teenage rebellion I did not care to learn it. So after four years of study I learned next-to-nothing; but I later regretted it. Later, there would be many situations in which I could have used German. This reminds me of Roland and his attitude towards the French language. Until the age of 8, he was fluent in French. Today, he forgot it all.

Soon however the Nazis forbade the teaching of humanistic subjects and required all schools to be technical. We were to be a nation of workers. There would be no need for Polish intellectuals under the Nazi regime. The teaching of History, Geography and Latin were strictly forbidden. The priests had a problem. Luckily the school building was under repair and the engineer in charge of the work agreed to join the teaching staff and design a technical program for the school that would allow it to continue operating. Thus the school became a “Road and Building Technical school”. Thus from the age of 12, I studied engineering. Later in England, I just continued in the same stream eventually earning a Civil Engineering degree.

Being in a building trade led to summer jobs.

In 1941 I remained in the school but our class was building a road pathway through the



forest that surrounded our school, as part of the school curriculum.

In 1942 I worked in building maintenance at mother's work in Orzarów, Cable Factory.

I lived with mother in a tiny room she had rented there from the beginning of the war. I remember her making row potato pancakes, which I loved. At work I would visit her office in the accounting department.

By the way

There were underground universities that run in secrecy in private homes. High school courses that had been banned from the schools were also taught this way. These activities had to be done

extremely carefully. Not every Pole was patriotic; there were also traitors, spies, volksdeutch and the German secret police. My distant relative, Mat Morawski spent two years in a concentration camp after bragging to his girlfriend about belonging to AK. (She must have repeated that information to others)



Many of our teachers were pre-war gymnasium teachers, but there were also some new ones. The engineer was one of them. Later a young teacher joined the staff to teach physical education. The priests were patriotic but also cautious. They would not allow politics among the students. This phys-ed teacher was less cautious; he openly talked to us about England, the soccer league, etc. I can only speculate that he was a young officer on mission in Poland. I imagine he parachuted into Poland from England and used his teaching position as a cover.

There was also a medical student who visited our school occasionally to give presentations about sex education and other topics. Years later I met him in Canada, in Barry's Bay. He had become a priest. I recognised him and talked to him. He asked me if I still had my faith. I told him I did not. He responded that he was flying back to England that evening. If he had only had a couple of hours free he would bring me back to the Lord again. He did not have time - so we said good-by. Who knows what might have happened if he had lingered.

Witold and Halina lost their rented bungalow on the east side of the river Vistula (Saska Kępa) during the first days of the war. The bungalow was hit by an artillery shell, and most of their possessions were stolen by looters. They found an unfinished apartment building where they secured accommodation by contributing money to complete the construction - a one bedroom apartment on the third floor. When the construction was



finished they moved in. My aunt lived there from 1940 to 1996, 56 years in total. When I visited Poland in 1995 I visited her there - the very place I had left in 1944.

From 1940 to 1943, this apartment became a meeting place for mother, Irka and I on weekends away from school.

We got nourished there and Witold and Halina were our closest family, always supporting and always there for us. We enjoyed each other's company and spent many memorable times together, going for walks, talking and dreaming of better times to come.

As I travelled on weekends to and from Bielany to my aunt's apartment in Praga, by streetcars, I remember one scary incident. The streetcar I was on went out of service and the few passengers that were on board had to disbar and wait for the next streetcar. Soon other passengers dispersed and I found myself alone. It was a deserted area, except for a bunch of boys some distance away. They soon spotted me and started moving towards me - that meant trouble as there were many youth bands in Warsaw. Fortunately the awaited streetcar arrived and I escaped with a kick from behind as I was jumping inside.

Warsaw Ghetto

To go from my school to my aunt's apartment I had to use a streetcar that passed right through the Jewish ghetto. At the entrance to the ghetto the streetcar would stop. At the entrance to each car, a German soldier would stand on the step to prevent Jews from escaping. The streetcar would go through the ghetto without stopping, and the German soldiers would dismount upon leaving the ghetto. The Jews had a miserable existence in the ghetto. The whole ghetto was surrounded by a brick wall about three metres high and was heavily guarded. Every Jew had to wear a white armband with a blue Star of David. They lived in constant danger of being shipped to the concentration camps and gas chambers.

Warsaw Ghetto uprising

In 1943 the Warsaw Ghetto uprising began. The remnant of Jews who were still there, determined to fight rather than to die in the gas chambers. They were surrounded by SS troops, Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian and Ukrainians who shot artillery shells into the ruins of the ghetto. The Jews had only rifles and revolvers against tanks and artillery guns. It was a very one-sided battle. I remember watching from a streetcar as I was passing by. Could the Poles have helped them? Not likely, the German Army had absolute control of the situation. Some Jews tried escaping through the sewer pipes. Many of their bodies were washed out into the river Vistula, close to my school in Bielany. In 1944 the same fate would meet the Warsaw population, and I would be a target of similar onslaught.

In the last year in the school, I was joined by Bolesław Sobieski, a distant relative on my grandmother's side. (Our grandmothers were sisters). Our families rarely saw each other. My grandparents did not travel out of their house, so it was their relatives who would come to visit us. This family moved from suburbs to Żoliburz in Warsaw close to my school. Bolesław started attending school with me but he did not live in the residential school. He was a big, strong boy. We had little in common and never got to know each other better or became close. Later he took part in the Warsaw uprising and after the war was sent by the Russians to Siberia where he spent 10 years.

I remember needing a new suit as I was growing out of my old one. My mother had no money to get one. My uncle came to my rescue. He got some truck tarpaulin from the auto dealership he worked for, and my aunt had it sewn into a suit. It was yellowish and very strong and heavy. When it got wet, it got so stiff that I could hardly bend my leg.

I got in my last year in Bielany, and wore it later into the Warsaw Uprising.

Wlochy



Grandmother, Mother and Irka in our Wlochy apartment. Last weeks before mother died

In 1943, when I was 16 years old, I finished the last grade of the residential school and moved to live with my mother, grandmother and sister, into an apartment in a town of Wlochy, at street Kochanowskiego 29 aptm. 11, close to Warsaw.

Mother and grandmother had already lived there a year (since grandfather's death in 1942), but Irka and I lived there for only about six months in 1943. Mother died there in 1943 April 20.

Somewhere about this time we started to receive money from Lublin. This was my father's share of income from the factory that he shared with his brothers. My father never returned from the war, so whether it through internal audit or other means, the authorities ordered that we should be paid. I really don't know how we got it. Or could it be that my aunt went after it? These payments continued after the war and Irka was able to study law at the university of Warsaw. Once the factory was taken over by the Communists, payments stopped and my sister quit studying after completing two years of university. The same Uncle Boleslaw, who treated us so poorly in 1939, was the one who sent the money to her.

At one point, I got an inflamed thumbnail and Irka took me to a doctor. He said he needed to pull out the thumbnail. I was petrified, while Irka simply said "do it". I could have kicked her. Having a nail pulled out is painful! Should I not have something to say on this matter! I received an injection of pain killer, the doctor thrust scissors into my thumb, cut the nail and pulled the two halves out. Ouch! But I did not cry. The pain really started a few hours later, and it took few days to subside. The nail grew back in time, but I will never forget the experience.

These few months were the darkest of my life. My mother was dying. (Earlier, in hospital, they had opened her up only to find cancer had spread all over. They stitched her up, gave her three months to live, and returned her home.) Mother had terrible pain and the pain killers did not help much. She withered to a skeleton. She was sad, worried (about what would happen to Irka and me) and scared about going to hell. With all our great Christian education, we were not much help to her on this matter. For Catholics, only a priest can deal with such problems and I don't remember one being around. We were told to keep away the pain killer pills away from her to prevent a possible overdose.

One day, Irka and I both had to go to a photographer to get a picture taken for an identity certificate. On our way there Irka said, "I left the pain killer pills with mother." I replied that she should not have done it, but then, it is mother's decision what to do. When we

returned, we knew mother was dying. She had swallowed all the pills. She was hallucinating. She looked in a corner of her room and saw Satan waiting to get her. She died in horror. No priest ever arrived. I don't know if we even called for one. The body remained in our small apartment overnight. By the way, we never got the photographs we had taken. The photographer was arrested; he was a burglar robbing homes in his spare time.

By the way

My relation with mother became very cold after the two years in Ostrzeszów, but I broke down seeing her suffer so much. I burst into tears, cried in her arms, hugged her and told her how sorry I was for being mad at her. At least she died knowing that our relationship was restored. I was ever so happy that we ended this way.

That night, after mother died I was scared. I was already afraid of darkness. But her talk of Satan combined with having her body at home made things that much worse. I hardly slept. But there was also a great fear of the unknown. I didn't know it, but I was an orphan, as both mother and father were no longer alive. We had no means of support, other than mother's and grandfather's pensions and the money from Lublin. I was not fit for work. I made a resolution then, that I would raise myself. And I did. I carefully planned my future. My first priority was to get education. This would become my principal motivation for years to come. The other was to go west, there was no future for me in Poland. Yet another resolution was to keep myself clean, no smoking, no drinking, no idleness. From then on I would do all I could to achieve. I was not a looser! I reached a lot of my goals, yet I did a poor job overall. I never had a mentor. No one who would lead me. I learned far too late that I ignored nurturing social skills, even some basic Christian virtues like love, patience and humility. It took me a lifetime to find my way back. It was like going around in a circle, many times I was off target, but now I am closer to God and truth than I was then.

Uncle Witold was killed in 1943 July 16th. Witold was active in AK (Home Army). On my visits to his apartment he showed me underground newspapers and talked about some of the decisions he had had to make, to deal with Polish traitors collaborating with the Nazis. Exactly which political organization he was with or what rank he held - he never told me. Witold was wounded, as a passer-by, during a fight between Germans and the Polish resistance unit. Whether Witold was part of this unit I do not know. He was arrested and taken to a prison hospital. Efforts were made to bribe the guards and to free him. But something went wrong. The plot was discovered. And when 100 Polish men were executed in retaliation for the action, Witold was among the group. He was executed by the Germans on a stretcher.

A few months after mother and Witolt died, we liquidated the Włochy apartment and moved to live with Aunt Halina in her Warsaw apartment. The movers came with a two horse driven wagon, with pneumatic wheels and packed all our possessions onto it. Our whole family rode on the wagon and I sat at the back of the wagon, facing backwards to watch that no one would climb the wagon and steal the little we had. During the war

people stole whatever they could out of desperation. While the men were loading the wagon in Włochy, I had an uncontrollable laughing spell. For some reason I found it funny to watch the men straining under the heavy loads. I had to hide myself so as not to offend anyone.

In my book "God's Leading in My life" on page 19 I mention
"God's move in my life Nr. 2 - I receive a new spirit" and
"God's move in my life Nr. 3 - The helpless situation changes"



Aunt Halina's Warsaw apartment (the last year in Poland)

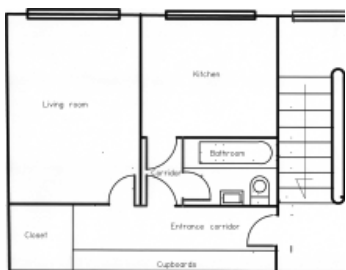
Our family of seven was now reduced to four and we needed each other more than ever. My grandmother, now 81, was frail and broken hearted but she was the psychological pillar for the rest of us. She would calm things down, cook and manage things at home.

My aunt, now grieving, experienced all kinds of mental problems, but managed the finances and the practical, business side of living. Irka went to work in Ożarów, where mother had worked, in order to have the proper identification papers and some level of protection against the possibility of being forced into slave labour in Germany. I went to a "Building Construction College" and completed my first year there.

By the way

Studying in the college, there was one subject that I took a second time. It was "Descriptive Geometry". In Bielany I struggled with it. It demanded 3-D perception that I did not have. Strangely enough taking it for the second time in college – I got it. In fact it was my best subject. At home I drew pictures of intersections of three dimensional objects that I still have today. It was one of those puzzling phenomena I cannot explain.

During the war years I remained finicky about my eating preferences. I would not touch butter, so my grandmother would melt pork fat, add fried onions and salt to use as a spread on my bread. Now we know that butter is bad for clogging of the arteries, but this fat was even worse. We were short of food so my grandmother tried to squeeze every little bit of nourishment she could lay her hands on. She would cut pig-skin from pork into tiny little pieces and cook them in soup. I would try to fish them out so I would not have to eat them, and always complained about it.



We were crammed into a one-bedroom apartment. Grandmother, aunt and Irka slept in the living room / bedroom and I slept in the kitchen. Hardly any of our earthly possessions were left. Aunt sold Witold's suits for money to live on.

I had the easiest time being able to go to school. My chores were, each Saturday, to break large lumps of coal with an axe into small pieces ready to burn in the stove. I took out the garbage and carried anything heavy up to the

third floor. Sundays, aunt and I would go for long walks and talk about her dreams of planning a garden in one of the houses she owned.

Aunt Halina worked all her life and saved all she could investing in real estate. During the war she stopped working. It did not pay to work in her case. The cost of living was rapidly increasing and salaries were frozen. Uncle Witold was the sole wage earner and she would speculate on the black market. They did alright. During this time they acquired a house in Otwock and some pieces of land.

I remember when she purchased two wooded lots in Juzefów (the ones we inherited after her death, 50 years later). The real estate agent was a young man who was very attracted to her. She did not trust him, so at her insistence, all the negotiations at our home took place in my presence. I remember these evenings, trying to study by the bright carbide lamp, while they negotiated the land transaction details.

To this day I do not understand how they did it. After Witold's death in 1943 things got bad and she would sell some of the pieces of land and live off the profits. Later, under communism, she continued doing this. Aunt Halina helped my grandparents and my mother financially all through the war. In that, she was a generous and unselfish person, although in other things she acted like a spoiled child.

About this time, I remember Aunt Halina mentioning that my distant relative, whom I had never met, had been arrested and was in Pawiak, the notorious prison from which the Nazis send prisoners to concentration camps or picked men for execution in retaliation for attacks against Germans. That relative was Maciek Morawski (uncle Mat) whom I later met in Italy, England and Canada. Eventually he was sent to a concentration camp where he remained for the next two years until the liberation.

By the way

Mat told me that while he was in Pawiak prison, in order to gain more freedom and better food, he volunteered to do some work. He was attached to a plumber. Mat's very first assignment was to clean a plugged toilet. On arriving Mat discovered it was overflowing with poo. He reported it to the plumber asking for some tools. The answer he got was "What's wrong with your hands?" Mat had to do the job with his bare hands.

During that year, Warsaw was occasionally bombed by the Allies and there were frequent air raid sirens urging people to go to shelters, mostly in the basement of any large building. My aunt would instantaneously respond, dragging the whole family with her. Aunt Halina was extremely scared of any danger and would hurry us all out. Often however they were unable to wake me up, and I slept through many air raids. Basements really were not all that safe; in a direct hit you could be buried alive by the collapsing upper floors. All they were good for was to prevent shrapnel fragments from anti-aircraft shells or from exploding bombs nearby. Upstairs all our windows were taped in an X-manner to hold the glass together in the event it was shattered by explosions. This would at least have protected us against flying pieces of broken glass.

Travelling each day to school was both dangerous and nerve-wracking. The streetcars were overcrowded to the point that the only way to get onto them was to hang on from the outside.

In my book “God’ Leading in My Life” on page 20 I mention
“Miracle No. 2 – 1943 – while jumping onto a streetcar”

The other danger was the frequent German mass captures for slave labour. They would often arrive unexpectedly and cordon off a few blocks of the city. Anyone caught inside was a fair game. Everybody had to show their identification and the Germans would keep able-bodied people for slave labour in Germany. Others they would free. Any suspicious person they would imprison and some execute in revenge for any attacks on the Germans. On one occasion, while coming back from school, our streetcar was surrounded by Germans. They emptied out the whole streetcar and lined us for an identification check. They would keep young, strong people (especially if they were not employed in the war effort industry). When it came to me, I was small and childish looking, so I got a kick in my pants and was released. Had I not been, I would have been on my way to Germany to work as a forced labourer. I was always on the lookout for such traps. No one liked to be on the streets unless absolutely necessary.

By the way

Imagine the tragedy of losing a husband, a lone wage earner for a family with small children. He would be unable to help his family in any way, being shipped away for forced labour. Yet it happened weekly to many families, causing irreparable suffering.

Today, it is politically correct to talk about the Nazis but not the Germans of those days. Not so back then. Every German meant trouble to us. It was true that some Nazi units were particularly cruel, nevertheless German non-Nazi units did a lot of policing and committed hostile acts against the Polish population. Wehrmacht (regular army) and Luftwaffe (airforce) units were believed to be more sympathetic to us. For retaliation against the civilian population, Germans used mostly foreign troops. This was part of a diabolic Nazi plan to create divisions in Eastern Europe that would benefit Germans in the long run. Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians, nations that partnered with Germany were drafted into SS troops (Storm troops) under German command. These troops did most of the dirty work for the Germans. They burned Polish villages in retaliation for partisan attacks, they destroyed Warsaw Ghetto and fought against the Warsaw Uprising. These troops were known for their brutality, rape and torture. Not only did they do the Germans’ dirty work, often against the civilian population, but they seemed to enjoy every minute of it.

By the way

As for why nations aligned themselves with Nazi Germany there were many reasons.

Ukraine – wanted independence from Russia and to establish a separate, independent state

Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – because of fear of Russia

Finland was attacked and in war with the Soviet Union and needed help

Norway was conquered by the Nazis and Sweden remained neutral

Italy and Hungary had their own regular armies, their own command and uniforms. These forces were reluctant participants in the Nazi efforts, they were really not very reliable or successful especially on the eastern frontier

Those who object to my referring to “Germans” rather than to “Nazis”, must realize that there were not that many Nazis. We have a similar situation now with Moslems. Ninety-three percent of Moslems are peace loving people, seven percent of Moslems are involved in Jihad. So it was by the Nazis, a small minority kept the German population captive. The regular army were not Nazis they were the German Army. The Nazis were thinly spread throughout German society, the army and the occupied territories to control the whole system.

In the German occupied territories, Nazis held key government positions. Every town had it's own German governor, normally a Nazi. Next were the enforcers, Gestapo, Gendarmes and other special purpose organizations composed of Nazis. Nazis would use foreign troops to do their dirty work. All foreigners were automatically put into S.S. troops, with the exception of Italians and Hungarians. Thus Ukrainians, Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians served in the S.S. Foreign S.S. troops were under Nazi command. In Poland, the Nazis often used Ukrainian S.S. for reprisal against civilian population.

AK (Home Army directed by the exiled Polish Government in London, England)

We felt helpless and defeated under a brutal Nazi force. My pride screamed for action. I needed to fight against this oppression. I hated being a victim. I hated having brutes and criminals rule my life. I had to find a contact with AK underground resistance movement. Uncle Witold was part of it and so was my mother. Now they were both dead and I had no contact whatsoever. I found one in the school I attended from the most unlikely person. He was an older student who hardly ever attended school and most of us students thought of him as a spy. He asked me if I was interested in joining the AK. If I said “yes” and he was a spy I would be arrested. I was so desperate that I took a chance and said “yes”. He gave me a contact.

In January 1944, at the age of 16, I joined the Polish underground movement (Home Army, in Polish AK) under orders of the exile Polish Government in London, England. Ours was a small cell of five people, led by a young man no older than 18 or 19. We met in different apartments all over town. We would arrive one at a time, by taking indirect routes and checking frequently to ensure we were not being followed. It was like the Boy Scouts. We got instructions how to handle a gun, organization rules, combat methods, etc. Later we carried guns or bundles of paper from one location to another. It was kids' stuff, nothing life-threatening, although being caught on these type of missions would have been certain to get you thrown into a concentration camp.

I enlisted my best friend from Bielany, Jurek Gurzęda into this very same underground

cell. Jurek's father was a policeman, I think his mother had died, which was why he was in boarding school with me. He was an only child. Jurek looked Jewish. Could it have been that his mother was Jewish and was arrested by the Nazis? We never talked about it. I also got my sister Irka in. She trained as a nurse. Irka had been very down at that point and joining AK gave her a new lease on life and a hope. She thanked me for this opportunity at the time. I am not sure what she thought of the idea later on.

In my book "God' Leading in My Life" on page 21 I mention
"Miracle No. 3 – 1944 – on an AK assignment"

By the way

AK forces had a hard job equipping the rank and file with arms. Later at the start of the Uprising many units had almost half of the men unarmed. Where did the arms come from?

Some were buried in 1939

Some were parachuted by the Allies

Some were smuggled from abroad

Some were bought from German traitors

Some were manufactured locally

During the Uprising

We had no tanks, armoured vehicles, anti tank or airplane weapons or heavy machine guns. Our strength was about 40,000 men and 5,000 women.

My aunt sensed something suspicious when I started exercising, and practicing some of my combat procedures (falling to the ground) in our apartment. She became even more suspicious when a school friend (Szatański) invited me to his village for a two weeks vacation. This invitation had nothing to do with AK, but my aunt thought I was on manoeuvres. During the school year, I had helped him with studying, which came to him very hard, and he repaid me with the offer of the vacation. On the farm, food was plentiful, I helped with some farm chores, but otherwise I had a needed rest and fresh air. I learned there, on my own, how to swim. There was a pond on the farm, which was not too deep, where we bathed. Once I decided to swim. I did.

Now at this point let me share with you, my sister's view of what took place at that time. From her diary comes the following:

My sister's diary

1947 April 04

So much time passed from the last time that I wrote my thoughts in this diary. Full six years passed from that time. During these six years my life changed radically. The whole family fell apart. First grandfather died in 1942 from heart failure. The next year, mother died from cancer on 1943 April 20 after horrible not suffering but torture. She suffered so much that although we children desired her to live, looking at her torture we thought in our hearts that relief is only possible through death. A few weeks after the death of mother new misfortune overtook us. The husband of Aunt Hala was arrested by the Germans and placed in the prison Pawiak from where he was not

destined to see freedom. In July 1943 Gestapo notified us of his death. That was a shock not only to aunt as his wife but to us also as we loved him as our own father.

From the whole large family what was left were four people: grandmother, aunt, Andrzej and I. We moved to live together with aunt on Grochowska street. I started to work in the Copper Cable Works in Ożarów where previously mother had worked. Every day I had to get up at 5:00 a.m. to go to work and I arrived home at 7:00 p.m. I was earning 300 zloty a month so that self-support was out of the question. Andrzej after completing school of Marian brothers, began attending municipal "Building College." We were all supported by aunt.

In May of 1944 Andrzej recruited me to the Polish Underground resistance AK, which he had joined earlier on. I started leading a double life because neither aunt nor especially grandmother knew that I and Andrzej belonged to the resistance movement. Anyway in the last months before the Warsaw Uprising I felt excellent. I had lots of energy, and if I could I would conquer the whole world. Just before the Warsaw Uprising we both, Andrzej and I, slept no longer at home so that aunt must have suspected something. At the outbreak of the uprising I found myself in a suburb of Mokotów. Warsaw Uprising was like a bad dream full of tragic memories. Now when all of this is behind me I wonder how I survived it.

This ends the quotation from my sister's diary.

In June 1944, I turned 17 and the end of war felt near. German troops were retreating from the Russians. The sound of gunfire could be heard in Warsaw. Germans were about to call 100,000 able Polish men to dig trenches for the defence of Warsaw. The air was electric in tension. In our AK cell we were told to go home, stay and wait for a messenger to give us orders. Both my sister and I stayed home awaiting our orders. My sister received orders first and left reporting for duty. I had to wait, all the time worrying that I would be forgotten. Finally a messenger arrived. She gave me a place, date and hour to report to. Oh yes, and an all-important code word as well (By now, I no longer remember what it was – every unit had a different code). My appointment was for the next day - I waited impatiently for the hour to arrive.

Poems I wrote during the Nazi occupation of Poland

This was a very difficult time in my life. Nazi oppression, the death of my mother and uncle, poverty and hopeless situation all around. I was 16-years-old when I wrote this patriotic poem as an expression of my faith and purpose for my life.

Chcę Polsko byś była od morza do morza
Byś swymi ramionami osiągała oceany
Byś była jutrzemką, jaśniała jak zorza
Nowym lecz pięknym czasem żeby Twoje dzwony
Biły radosną pieśń do Boga
Chcę żebyś była tak piękna jak prawda
Chcę, byś jaśniała swą krasą nad wszystko
Żeby Twoim kultem nie była ułudą
Żeby Twoja myśl nie sięgała nisko,
Lecz na szczyty
Chcę i wola ma spełniona być musi
Bo tak jak ja czuję, tak czują tysiące
To nic, że wróg mowę naszą głuszy
To nic, męczarni upłyną miesiące
Nowy czas, dusza dawna, swoja
I w jedną myśl obojga się stało
W myśl twej potęgi Polsko!
Ojczyzno Polaka! Ojczyzno i moja!

I want you Poland, to be from sea to sea
With your arms, that you would encircle oceans
That you would be a morning star, shining brightly
To new and brighter era, that your bells would ring
Uplifting sound - a merry song to God
I want your beauty to lie in truth
I want your justice to rule over all
That your faith is not in lies
That your vision would not be low
But reach the peaks
I want, and my wish must be fulfilled
Since, as I want, so want thousands
No matter - that enemy silences us now
No matter - months of oppression will pass
New era, our soul remains as before – our own
Both merge in one vision
Vision of Poland's power and influence
Homeland of a Pole! Mine homeland too!

1943 Włochy near Warsaw

Oczekując wyzwolenia

Na nic frazesy i piękne słowa
Kiedy się na nich kończy nasz świat
Naprzód uczynek a potem mowa
I pierwszej serce a później bat
Nie starczy z łoży wybijać brawa
Trzeba samemu do walki zejść
Nie starczy by okryła sława
Lecz zasłużona by była część
Wysłuchuj pilnie, wytężaj wzrok
Byś nie przespał chwili
W której rozegnać przyjdzie zmrok
Bo dla tych jest i cześć i chwala
co do ostatku byli

Awaiting liberation

Useless are phrases and flowery words
When in them ends our commitment
First let there be action, then words
First willing heart, than force
It is not enough - giving applauses from safety
One must himself step into battle
It is not enough to gain medals
But that they are deserved
Listen attentively, strain your eyes
Not to miss the moment
When it is time to repel oppression
For respect and rewards belong to those
who fight to the end



1940



1941



1942

CHAPTER 3 - Warsaw Uprising

Historical background

Internet Source: "The Warsaw Uprising August 1, 1944 - October 2, 1944" by Łukasz Pajewski

Days before the uprising - July, 1944

On June 23rd, 1944, the Soviet Army began its summer offensive in Belarus, the Ukraine, and the Baltic region. The Germans, although they had rightly predicted where the Soviets were going to strike, could not muster the sufficient manpower to form an effective line of defense. The Soviet offensive, which began a little past Mińsk (now in Belarus), had within five weeks covered a distance of about 1000 kilometres on a front more than 400 kilometres wide. Patton's race across France pales in comparison to this massive undertaking. By the last week of July, the Soviets were approaching the outskirts of Warsaw. The Germans, in a desperate attempt, tried to make a stand at Warsaw - Hitler had said that Warsaw must be defended at all costs. To that effect, the Germans gathered units of the 2nd and 9th Armies, as well as the Viking and Totenkopf SS-Armored divisions, the Herman Goering Airborne Armored divisions, and the 4th and 9th Armored divisions. The Soviet divisions, already worn out by their prolonged thrust, were stopped by the Germans on the outskirts of Warsaw in a battle on July 30th - August 5th.

In Warsaw itself, the proximity of the Soviet troops encouraged the leadership of AK to contact the exiled Polish government in London, England requesting permission to start the mass uprising, which had been in the works for several months now. It was then still expected that the Soviets would break through the German lines, cross the Vistula, and free Warsaw. The London government gave the go-ahead for the uprising, hoping to achieve its goal of controlling Warsaw by AK forces in order to strengthen its bargaining position with the Soviets.

To General Komorowski, the leader of the AK, it looked like the time was right for the uprising to begin. He had received reports that in some spots the Soviets had already crossed the Vistula River. He did not know the exact details of the tank battles being waged at the time, and he did not know the next series of moves the Soviets had planned. The wheels of the uprising machinery, once set in motion, could not be easily stopped. The "W" hour was finally set for 5:00 p.m., August 1st, 1944.

At the time of the outbreak of the uprising, the AK had about 12,000 soldiers in Warsaw proper. There were enough weapons for maybe 4 thousand of them, and enough ammunition for two or three days of fighting. There were also some units of the AL (Communist units) which joined in the fight. Additionally, there were other resistance groups, like the Boy Scouts, and NSZ (Nationalist units). The German forces consisted of about 20,000 men, mostly from Wehrmacht, SS, and Police troops. The Germans had tanks, artillery, and airplanes, which the Poles were defenseless against.



Warsaw Uprising August 1 - 4

"W" Hour had been set for 5:00 p.m. on August 1, and when it came, the soldiers that had spent the afternoon in hiding came out on the street to fight the Germans. From the beginning, things were not going well. The Germans had been on full alert since 4:30 p.m., and the inexperienced Polish youths had to attack a fortified enemy in broad daylight. It came as no surprise then, that many objectives were only partially, if at all, completed. The most headway was made downtown, but it wasn't enough to meet up with the fighters from the Starówka (Old City), Powiśle (River front), or other parts of the city.

In some parts, like Żolibórz and Ochota, things went so poorly that the partisans were largely forced to retreat into the forests surrounding the city. The attacks on the Okęcie and Bielany airports were repulsed, like the attack on the Raszyn radio station. The first stroke, on which so many things depended, was thus only partially successful - large parts of the city were now controlled by the insurgents, but

within those sections there were still many fortified pockets of German resistance.

Both the Poles and the German garrison suffered heavy casualties that first day. Yet both also received reinforcements. For the Germans, they were units of the Airborne Armored Herman Goering and the 19th Armored Divisions, both of which were passing through the city to join battle with the Soviets. For the insurgents they came in the form of mass support from the citizens of Warsaw. The insurgents thus got to benefit from all the supplies and experience that the populace had amassed in the five years of German occupation.

On August 2nd, the insurgents resumed the attack. By August 4th, Śródmieście (Downtown) was largely in Polish hands. Many of the troops that retreated after the first day had a chance to return, since the Germans were still confused and preoccupied with fighting the Soviets. Wola repulsed several German counterattacks, shielding Śródmieście (Downtown). In other parts of the city, the situation remained very fluid.

Thus, by August 4th, there were three large insurgent regions of the city. There was the Śródmieście-Powisłe-Starówka-Wola region, the Żyrardów region, and the Mokotów region - overall a large part of the city. In those four crucial days, the partisan units acquired much combat experience, and the support of the people. Yet at the end of those four days, there was also a very clear lack of ammunition and other supplies. It was also expected that by this time the Soviet troops would be crossing the river to help the insurgents. General Komorowski sent a message to London asking for supply airdrops, inquiring when the paratrooper brigade would arrive, and asking the London government to persuade the Soviets to cross the river. He also ordered all offensive operations to cease, so that ammunition might be conserved. The wait for Soviet and Western relief began.

August 5 - 12

That relief soon came. Polish bomber pilots flying from bases on the Apula (Italy) started making nightly ammo drops over Warsaw. The pilots then had to fly back to Italy, since the Soviets refused them permission to land on their ground. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough. Many of the airdrops actually fell into German hands, and the deliveries were eventually called off because of the high risk and relatively low return.

The 5th of August also saw the first determined counterattacks by the Germans. The thrust came from the Wola region, and after three days of heavy fighting, the 5000 Wehrmacht soldiers cracked part of the AK defense, which consisted of about 2000 poorly supplied and armed men. This drove a wedge between Śródmieście (Downtown) and Stare Miasto (Old City), splitting the largest insurgent enclave in two.

At the same time, the other German thrust begun in the Mokotów-Ochota region. The defense of those regions by the insurgents shielded Śródmieście for over a week, staving off a premature collapse of the armed effort. The Germans were able to make only limited headway, managing to recapture one of the main east-west thoroughfares across the Vistula.

By August 10th, however, the AK leadership knew the result of the Soviet-German battle that had taken place, and knew that the Soviets would not be advancing to free Warsaw. A previous order, stating that insurgents move out of the way of large German attacks, was changed so that connectivity could once again be reestablished between the various city regions. At that time the German leadership also started to vent its anger on the civilian population. Thousands of civilians were executed, and many more died as they were used as a shield driven before the German troops as they advanced toward the insurgent barricades. It had become clear to both sides that the rest of the fight would be a long and dirty struggle, which pitted on the one side supreme courage and determination against a better-trained, better-armed, and numerically superior opponent.

August 12 - September 2

After the fall of Wola, the German attack centered on the Stare Miasto (Old City) region. This area was the largest insurgent enclave, and it was also the region with the bridges to the other side of the Vistula. The attack came on the 12th of August, and after heavy fighting, the Poles were forced to retreat, leaving the area of the old Jewish ghetto. Yet at the same time that they were withdrawing from one position, the insurgents were carrying out a counter-attack to reform a link between Śródmieście (downtown) and Stare Miasto (the Old City). While this attempt was unsuccessful, it did force the Germans to divert some troops from the main thrust to deal with this new event. Seeing that reestablishing connections between the city districts failed, Komorowski once again turned to the London government for aid. Another request was made for the deployment of the Polish Airborne Brigade, as well as for more supply drops. An order was also sent out to all AK units around Warsaw to come to its aid. This was only partly successful, as only about 1400 of the 3000 available men were able to make their way into the city. The insurgents, however, erased some of the German centers of resistance (among others on August 11th in Staszic palace and on August 20th in stubbornly defended house of PAST on Zielna St.). They also enlarged their possessions in Śródmieście-Południe (Downtown South) region.

After conquering Stare Miasto (Old City) the insurgents tried to stop traffic along the east-west traffic route along Al. Jerozolimskie-Poniatowski Bridge, but they came up against unbeatable defense.

September 6 - onwards

- On September 6th Germans conquered Powiśle (riverfront)*
- On September 11th 47th Soviet Army conquered the Praga (part of Warsaw on the east side of River Vistula)*
- On September 13th The Germans blew up the bridges across River Vistula*
- On September 16th 22nd a part of the First WP Army (Polish Army under Soviet command) opened some bridge-heads (across the River Vistula) in Czerniaków, between Poniatowski Bridge and Railway Bridge, and in Żoliborz.*
- At the same time Russian and Polish Airforces gained mastery of the air above Warsaw and were dropping weapons, ammunition and food.*
- On September 22th Czerniaków fell*
- On September 27th Mokotów fell*
- On September 29th Żolibórz fell*
- On September 30th In face of hopeless situation – hunger and a lack of weapons, ammunition and medical help, the AK started negotiations with "Bach."*

By the way

The AK fighters in the parts of Warsaw that fell to the superior power of tanks, artillery and well-armed SS combat troops, had to fight to the last bullet. Most of them died and any left alive would be executed anyway. As for the civilian population in these areas, they died under collapsing buildings or were gunned down afterwards. I wonder how many survived? Hospitals in these areas were not spared either. I would not be writing this book if I had been there. As it was, my part of Warsaw, centrum North was next, but was saved by the capitulation of Warsaw.

October 2

In headquarters of General von dem Bach, commander of the "Bach" regiment, in Ożarów - Poles signed a capitulation act. The insurgent army kept the combatant rights. The displaced population was conducted to the concentration camp in Prószków and from there to the back of the front-line, to extermination and work camps in Poland and Germany.

This ends Internet quotation

The Aftermath

The Warsaw Uprising lasted from 1944 August 1st to 1944 October 2nd a total of nine weeks or 63 days. It was supposed to last at most three days, after which it was expected that the Russian Red Army would join the battle.

No one expected the Red Army's refusal to help. They even prevented Allied help, by refusing the use of Soviet airports for refuelling the Allied fleet and for the landing of damaged Allied bombers.

Thus German forces could freely burn and blow up Warsaw, destroying almost 80 percent of the city. Even after Warsaw capitulated, the Nazis continued wrecking the city, till January of the following year, when the Soviet offense restarted.

Map of Warsaw Uprising

Orange arrows on the east of the Vistula River - advancing Soviet Red Army

Dotted orange narrow arrows crossing the River Vistula

Three locations where the Polish Army that fought alongside the Russians, crossed the river to help the Uprising. The Soviets stopped it, and the troops which crossed the river were abandoned and joined the AK forces.

Blue arrows on the west side of the River Vistula - German forces attacking AK held positions

Four bridges across the River Vistula were held by the Germans as well the roads from each bridge right across the city. These were German escape routes for their forces retreating from the front line and from the advancing Soviet forces. Because of the strategic importance of these escape routes, they were so heavily reinforced by tanks and artillery that AK forces had no chance to defeat them. As soon as the last German troops crossed the river, these bridges were to be blown up (Sept. 13).

Yellow areas were not involved in any warfare

Dark and thick, purple crosses pinpoint the areas where Germans mass executed civilians, the wounded and AK fighters after defeating our forces.

Purple circles - fortified positions that were held by the German forces

Small white and red flags show the German fortified positions defeated by the AK forces

2 large yellow circles show (1) where I was (2) where my sister was (we did not know that at that time)

Dark brown areas indicate areas under control of the AK forces.

The darker the shading the longer it remained in AK hands.

The light shaded area with yellow cross hatching - remained in AK hands only three days

Next were areas held four days, 20 days and 50 days.

The very darkest is the area held by AK forces on the day of surrender

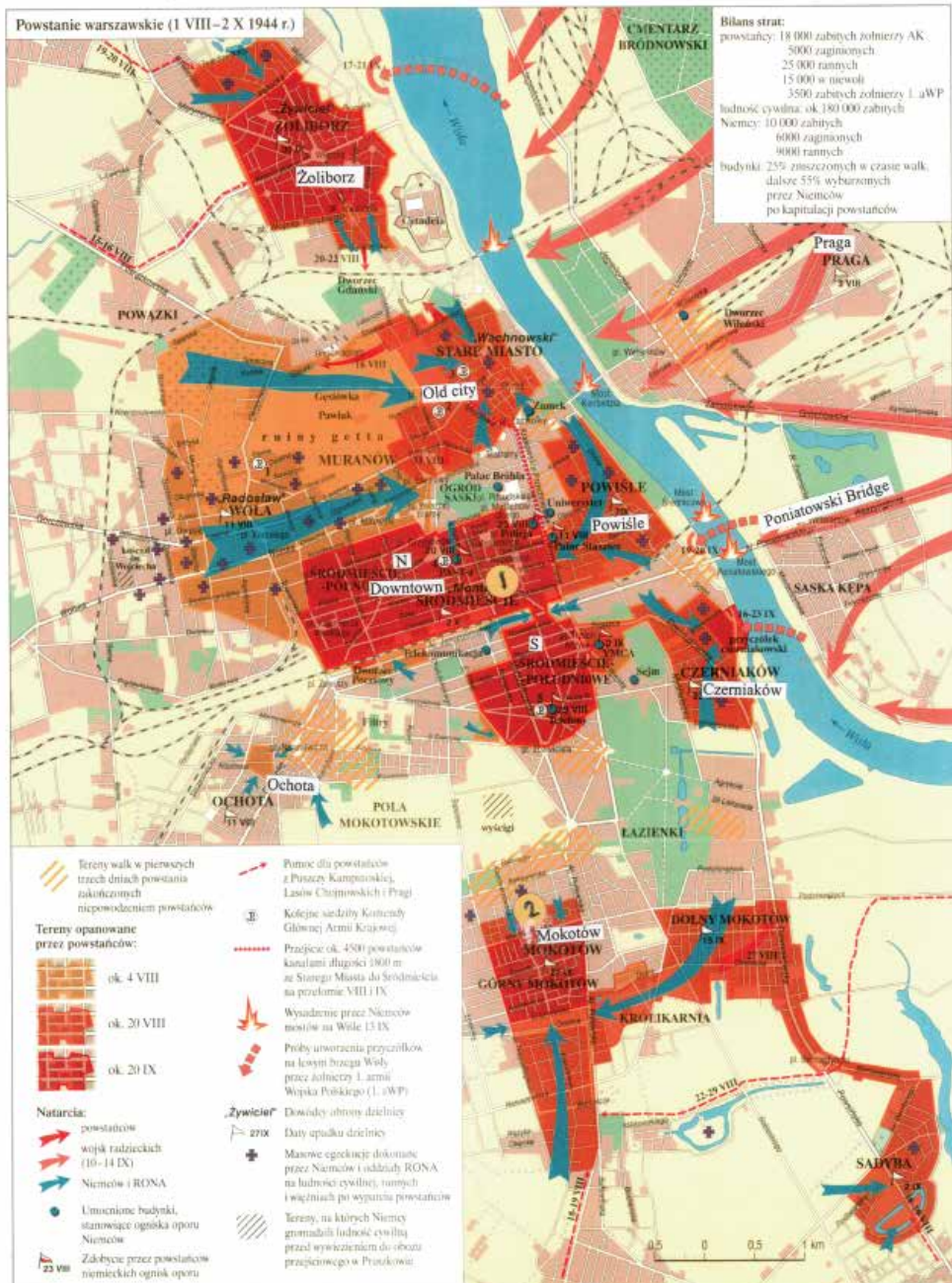
The strategy used by the German forces was:

To employ a large number of sharp shooters to harass AK forces with fire from all directions

To divide and conquer - they attempted to partition large areas into smaller pockets of resistance.

To bomb and totally destroy the area before attempting to move in with tanks and combat troops and taking physical possession of the terrain.

MAP OF WARSAW UPRISING



Warsaw Uprising as seen through my own eyes

The Warsaw Uprising took place 1944 August 1st - October 5th. I took an active part in the uprising as an AK fighter. In the 10 weeks of battle, Warsaw was turned into rubble. We were bombed, burned, wounded and killed. From my unit of 100 men, 10 were able to walk out on their own when Warsaw finally capitulated. My best friend Jurek Gurzęda was killed in the latter days of fighting. I was almost buried alive.

Reporting to our units

We lived on the east side of Warsaw, separated by River Vistula from Warsaw downtown where the uprising took place. Our part of town (Praga) never got involved in the Uprising, so my grandmother and aunt stayed in safety and so too would have my sister and I, had we not crossed the river.



In the days prior to the Uprising, both my sister and I waited home for our marching orders. Hers came first.

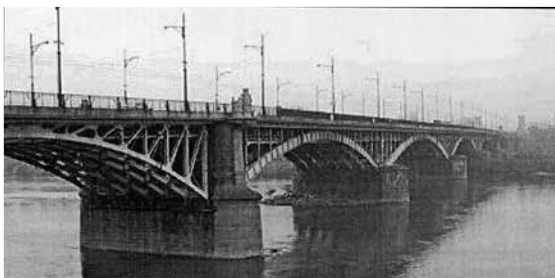
By the way

We never said a proper good-bye to each other (This was the last time in my life that I saw her, we never met again). During the Uprising, I never knew what part of town she was in. Our lives went apart at this very moment, and neither of us realized what was happening. Would we have reacted differently if we had known?

In my book “God’s Leading in My Life” on page 25 I mention “God’s move in my life No. 4 – Crossing the Poniatowski Bridge”

I was nervous. There was talk that all bridges across the River were blocked by the Germans. At last a messenger arrived with my instructions of where to report. I was given the date, address and time to report for duty. Also the secret code word, which identified me as an AK member (there were no papers due to secrecy). The next day I left and got

to Poniatowski bridge. It was closed, and a long line-up awaited the possibility of getting through. Many young people, like me, were trying to get to their AK units. At last the German guards - every 10 minutes or so - allowed a trickle of pedestrian traffic go across. When it was my turn, I passed the security checks and landed across on the other side. I was later told that half-an-hour later the bridge crossing was closed for good. The whole episode made me very anxious - it was so close. This was the hand of God determining my entire future. That crossing changed the whole course of my life. If I had not crossed, I would have remained in Poland under Communist rule.



Poniatowski Bridge

By the way

Even though I wanted to go west, should I have missed this opportunity, it is highly unlikely I would have had another chance to get out from under Communist rule. It was not easy to escape, and I don't think I would have had what it took to escape.

In my book "God's Leading in My Life" on page 26 I mention "God's move in my life No. 5 – Ordered to report to a location in the center of the city"



I reported to the location given to me, at the SE corner of Marszałkowska and Moniuszki streets, and was soon joined by the others in our cell. On our way to our meeting place we did not carry anything suspicious because of the heightened security by the Germans. We waited for our cell leader, for instruction, guns and ammunition. We waited and waited, but no one came. He could have been caught by the Germans, killed or wounded - we will

never know. Fighting had already begun (at 5:00 p.m.) and we were still waiting. Finally we decided to report to the officer in charge of the men fighting around our building.

By the way

I was not familiar with this part of town. In fact I was not "streetwise" at all. Being six years sheltered from the outside world, I was very insecure. Later, I would often feel confused finding my way around. Even though I went to school not far from there, I never walked too far from my school because of the constant danger of being rounded up for forced labour in Germany.

First day of the Uprising

Upon reporting to the officer in charge, we gave the code word, explained who we were, and were immediately given red and white armbands. We were accepted without any problem. Years later, as I thought about it, I realized they had been expecting us.



Typical barricade

We were ordered to help build barricades across the street, the main north-south artery (Ul. Marszałkowska). The company (KOSZTA) we had just joined was an experienced fighting unit. They were attached to Headquarters command and were to protect the leadership, high ranking officers and politicians. They were well armed with machine guns and plenty of ammunition, explosives and Molotov cocktails and consisted of about 100 men. During the Nazi occupation of Poland, they had attacked selected targets as ordered by the AK command (Armia Krajowa - home army), under orders from the Polish

exile government in London, England). In fact, earlier in 1944 I had witnessed one of their operations and now recognised two of the men.

By the way

Months earlier, while attending Building Construction College downtown near Nowy Świat street, one lunch break, I was out on the street when shooting erupted. There was a great commotion and I spotted two men, in long white raincoats, holding (under their coats) what appeared to be machine guns. They were calmly slipping away into a driveway between two houses and vanishing out of sight. I learned later that a German general was killed while driving through downtown. I ran and managed to get into the school building before the area was surrounded by German troops searching for the assassins. They arrested hundreds of Polish men, passersby, some of whom were later publicly executed in retaliation, while the rest were sent to Germany as slave labour. This is how dangerous it was to be on the streets in Warsaw under the German occupation.

I was told that the two men, that I had seen were brothers. Indeed there were three brothers, in all, I was told. They did not look like brothers, but they kept close together. (I was never able to verify that they were brothers and not cousins or just good friends) They were experienced and brave. They worked together as a team, covering for each other. They fought together in close hand-to-hand combat, fearless and calm. They did not talk much, but wore an air of confidence. They took part in all the major combat duties our unit was ever a part of. Amazingly, all three survived the Warsaw Uprising and were among the 10 of us that went to prisoner of war camps. Later we got separated. After the war I heard they were arrested by Americans for raiding the German population. These men, acting under orders from London, executed many dangerous missions during the German occupation.

Another man in this company, “Waldek” later became my friend. He, too, was part of this unit and was a veteran of many underground operations even though he was not much older than I. He, too, during the Uprising, fought in many combat missions. He, too, survived without a scratch. I will never understand it. Four of the fearless fighters, risking their lives at every opportunity, never backing from any challenge lived through it all. Amazing!

At first the five in our cell were never ordered to take part in any offensive military action. The company was well trained and they could not risk their lives taking fresh, untrained men (or rather boys). We were used for labour, watch duty, carrying the wounded, bringing water and supplies. That was just fine with me. I had never shot a gun in my life, and apart from some general theoretical instructions, I had never seen combat duties whatsoever. I was green and so were the others in my cell. Our enemies were experienced Ukrainian SS troops, seasoned in years of combat.

The five of us were greenhorns, schoolboys without any experience in military operations, but this was not the case with many other AK forces. Among us were professional soldiers, seasoned in the 1939 campaign and in the siege of Warsaw, some served as partisans. Many had years of undercover operations experience, men trained in England and parachuted to Poland for specific assignments, etc. There were communication and explosive experts, cooks, nurses, doctors, etc. Assembled in each district were supplies, arms, ammunition and whatever was needed. In building basements there were hand operated water pumps installed in advance. There were supplies of food, cooking utensils, fuel, etc. Sometimes these resources could not be accessed because the locations were under German control, other times they were not complete, because of the difficulty of transporting them under the watchful eyes of the Nazis. Nonetheless things were planned in advance. Although I don't think anyone expected two months of siege.

Joining the organised troops, were people like us, AK men who did not make it in time to their own units, but also some civilians who just wanted to join. They would hang around and do whatever was needed, build barricades, recover weapons from dead Germans or throw Molotov Cocktails at tanks. Eventually they would become part of a unit and accepted as such. Many units had young boys, some as young as 10 - 14 and older. Some of them were fearless, especially crawling toward tanks and setting them on fire. Over 200 German armoured vehicles were destroyed during the Uprising. After capitulation these kids went with us to prisoner of war camps.

In the opening minutes of the uprising, Marszałkowska Street was a thoroughway for Germans scattered around the downtown to get into their cars and flee for safety. As these cars raced through the street, AK fighters, hidden in doorways and apartment house windows, would shoot at them. Many cars crashed. Our men would race to retrieve their arms and gun down any resistance. Soon after this, we would dump junk into the street that made the passing of cars impossible.



Then tanks move in, more capable of negotiating obstacles. They would shoot guns and machine guns at our positions. To stop the tanks we started ripping the pavement and digging trenches across the street dumping earth along the trench. That allowed us to safely cross the street under fire, and prevented tanks from advancing. In time these barricades became huge and impassable.

As it became dangerous for tanks to advance, Germans had yet another weapon - Goliath. This was a small vehicle on caterpillar track, filled with explosives and controlled by a cable it dragged unwinding behind it. Germans would direct it toward the target and blow it up at barricades or other obstacles. We were trying to break the cable, by shooting at it, in an attempt to disable it. It blew a huge crater when exploded.



At the beginning, many AK fighters had no weapons, like the five of us. Whenever a German was killed he was stripped of arms, ammunition, helmet and uniform. At one point, right in the open, some 100 metres away lay a German soldier recently shot. We were dared to get his gun. In broad daylight, under fire it was far too risky. I considered it but no deal. No one else went for it either. Later, under cover of darkness someone did.

By the way

As I was considering going for the gun, I wondered. What if he is not dead? Would I had to wrestle the gun away from him? Would I have to kill him? With what? I had nothing but my bare hands.

AK men had no uniforms, we were in civilian clothes, some wore German uniforms, others wore police, post office or other uniforms. We all wore red and white armbands

(Polish National colours) on our right arms. In the end, passwords were issued and guards stopped you at every entrance to check your identity. Each day we were issued a new password. You could not move without a password as you were stopped along the way. Thus only authorized personnel had freedom of movement; civilians did not have that right, although they could move in their immediate neighbourhoods.

Later, I stood on guard duty many times and stopped all kinds of people, many of whom were high ranking officers. For this duty we stood in pairs, one checking documents and the other watching for someone pulling a knife or a gun. Among the civilian population there were Volksdeuch (Poles of German origin), traitors, sympathisers, but also German secret police in civilian clothes, German civilians, etc.

By the way

The Nazis were quite willing to grant Volksdeuch status to Poles who had some German roots. This enabled them to draft these men into the German army, or pressure them to spy within Polish communities. They would receive some material benefits, but would become a stench among their neighbours. Not everybody who was entitled to apply for Volksdeuch status, did.

That is how we stopped a civilian heading in the general direction of German positions. He did not know the password and we found out he did not speak Polish either. We took him in, searched him and discovered he was a German salesman from the Siemens company from Dusseldorf. As he was being interrogated, a Polish civilian attacked him and punched him on the face, screaming that he lost a son killed by the Germans. We pulled the civilian away. The German had a bleeding lip. I gave him my handkerchief to wipe the blood and calmed him down saying it wouldn't happen again. He was taken prisoner together with other Wermacht soldiers that we captured. These prisoners were treated well, fed and used for labour and recovery rescues to dig people up after bombing attacks. When Warsaw capitulated, they got their freedom.



Around the main command we were never on guard alone. There were always a few of us spread around and well armed. On one occasion we stopped a civilian and checked his papers. He was a Volksdeuch, that is a Pole who claimed to have German ancestry and was willing to collaborate with the Germans. Some Germans did not. There was a chocolate factory in Warsaw under the name Wedel which was owned by a German family living in Poland for generations. They did not declare themselves Volksdeuches and had none of the privileges Volksdeuches enjoyed. They remained neutral or even risked persecution. How do I know? One of their boys took part in the Warsaw Uprising. After the war the

Communists took over the Wedel company and it exists to this very day.

Coming back to my story, we did stop this Volksdeuch and he was loud and arrogant and I was itching to shoot him on the spot. However he was a doctor and he knew we could not effort to kill him. When we reported this to our command he was whisked away from us and put to work in a hospital. This made me angry. A traitor and he got away with it!

All this happened on the very first day of the Uprising. Late into the night we were told to catch some sleep, so we moved to the upper floor of the building looking for an empty room. Passing through some rooms I was startled when an AK man opened fire with a machine gun, from the nearby window. Empty shells shot up in a stream and I ducked down thinking I was being fired at. We were trained to do it automatically, but I was embarrassed to see empty shells instead.

By the way

We were drilled (in our training before the Uprising) to drop to the ground the instant we were under fire, heard artillery fire or aircraft bombs directed towards us. I practiced dropping to the floor, especially indoors. At home, my concern was a Voksdeuch family living directly below us. He could have figured it out and reported me to the Gestapo.

The building we were in had large rooms with polished wooden floors, yet was full of broken glass and plaster from the ceiling, the result of the fighting. Seeing the mess, we questioned our leader how we were going to sleep there. "Simple" he said. "Get some newspapers and sleep on them." We ended up sleeping on newspapers spread on the floor, covering ourselves with our own jackets. But it was a hard sleep. Fortunately it was a hot night.

By the way

Thank God that throughout the Uprising I never got sick, even though later, there would be some cool nights. From childhood I had frequently been sick - and was again later on, even up to today. Somehow, amazingly, I was spared the misery of being sick in those trying conditions.

Second day of the Uprising

When the tanks moved in, AK fighters would get close and throw Molotov Cocktails at the tanks, setting them on fire. Molotov Cocktail was a bottle filled with gasoline with a piece of cloth threaded through the cork, soaked in gasoline. You would light the cloth and immediately throw the bottle at your target. That was my first assignment. I was hiding in the second floor window



with matches and a Molotov Cocktail in my hand, waiting for a tank to get close. It never did. The bottle was wet and it looked as if the



Molotov
Cocktail

moment I struck a match, the whole thing would engulf in flames. While I was waiting, the tank fired its guns at windows in this building - there was smoke and large explosions close-by, but fortunately not my window. Any time a tank got hit and caught fire, the tank crew would jump out, run for the nearest doorway and barricade themselves inside, forming a little resistance group. AK men would attack and wipe them out. This is where my second assignment started that day.

Guarding a doorway. We would hide inside keeping out of sight. All doorways along the route had to be guarded to prevent tank crews from digging themselves in. I was given a lady-sized gun with two bullets (it was all they had) and posted in a large drive-in doorway, thought likely to be stormed next. Obviously it was a suicide mission. Two

little bullets would never stop a bunch of SS men with machine guns. Worst of all, I was really worried about how to lock the gun and never knew whether it was locked or unlocked (the writing on the gun was in a language I could not understand). Once I stood guard there for over 24 hours expecting a charge any minute. Fortunately for me, no one charged. A civilian lady had a pity on me and offered me a little cup of very strong black coffee, a real treat. Foolishly I refused - I had never tried coffee before in my life.

The Uprising continues

After the initial jogging for positions, the intensity of close combat eventually ceased as the Germans resorted to artillery strikes and air raids instead. The Uprising was supposed to last only few days and the Russian troops were supposed to arrive driving Germans away. According to script, we were to greet the liberating Russian army and everything would be great. However the Russians had a different plan. They stopped at the River Vistula, occupying part of Warsaw where my grandmother and aunt were, but short of aiding us. The Russians did not fancy helping their rivals, a pro-Western Polish Government in exile. They had their own version of Polish Government, communist and pro-Russian ready to take over. The Russians would stay where they were and would let Germans have a free hand to deal with the Uprising. Whoever planned the Uprising miscalculated. We were sunk!

Part of the Russian Army was also a Polish Army under control of the Communist Polish government based in Moscow, which was destined to take over control of Poland after the



Polish troops crossing the river Vistula on pontoons – they suffered heavy losses

liberation of Poland. One battalion of Polish troops under the command of colonel Berling crossed over the River Vistula at three places, in an attempt to help the Uprising. As soon as the Russians found it out, no other troops were sent. Later when I was a

prisoner of war, I was together with those soldiers. One reason Russians would not help the Uprising, was because it was a convenient way for them to get rid of pro-Western Polish sympathisers like us.

In the Warsaw Uprising there were also communist underground units, known as PPR, taking part along with AK. Russians did help them by dropping supplies, arms and ammunition by air. A small aircraft would fly at night, hovering over the rooftops of buildings and dropping loads in pinpoint precision. These Communist forces were small and did not amount to much.

As days passed by, the prospect of getting out of there grew dimmer. I began to wonder if I had made the biggest blunder in my life. I could be killed or worse crippled for life. I prayed to God to be killed rather than crippled. I had never had a fear of death, maybe of

the unknown pain of it, but not the fact of ceasing to exist in a physical form. I wondered about my sister; she was in grave danger of being raped. God was our only hope and my faith at this time was strong after the six years of teaching by the Christian brothers. I prayed with great intensity and God heard my prayers. Both my sister and I came through the Warsaw Uprising without a scratch!

My diary written later at a prisoner of war camp (what we could remember)

July	9	I depart to my schoolfriend's farm, east of Warsaw
	16	I return to Warsaw
	20	I take an oath and officially joined AK
	25	Germans announce 100,000 will be required to dig defence trenches around Warsaw
	31	Messenger contacts me and I get orders to report downtown Warsaw at a given time
August	1	I cross the Poniatowski bridge over the Vistula river and report at Moniuszki Str.12. Uprising starts
	2	Ukrainian SS, burned tank crew takes over Marszałkowska Str. 129 "Wrzos" is wounded
	3	Aircraft dropped leaflets - German demand for surrender
	5	We get bombed, fight fires, recover injured and dead
	7	We start military training
	17	We get bombed, have to change our quarters to Moniuszki Str.11
	19	We get orders to rescue Jasna Str.10, Gebertnera store is set on fire
	21	AK troops retake "Pasta" highest skyscraper in Warsaw
	22	1 st "Berta" 1000 kilogram railway gun projectile - made an enormous crater and turned a building into rubble
	29	AK troops retake Police headquarters
September	1	Entertainment from local artists. More "Berta's" Fire in Esplanada
	2	Fall of Old City. 24 German Sztuka planes fly by. Headquarters staff withdraws to another district for safety. Our company remains in the north of Warsaw, which now will be the next target for German attack.
	3	At 7:00 a.m. German Sztukas diving bombers attack. Moniuszki Str.12 on fire
	4	More air strikes. Moniuszki Str. 11 on fire
	5	Fall of Powiśle. "Berta" hits a magazine
	6	"Gebertner & Wolf" store destroyed by bomb. Some of our troops transferred to Nowy Świat Str.
	7	Killed: "Jeleń" (my best friend, Jurek Gurzęda) and "Wrzos"
	9	Bomb falls in a doorway I guard, I am almost buried alive.
	18	American parachute drop
	22	Fall of Czerniaków Some of our troops transferred to Mokotów
	27	Fall of Mokotów (I did not know my sister was there)
	28	Fall of Żoliburz
October	1	All hostilities halted. Surrender negotiations in progress

- 3 We receive watches from a nearby, bombed jewellery store
- 5 We march up and surrender to the German Wermacht. Next step Ożarów where my mother worked. Out of our troop of 100 plus, only 10 of us are fit enough to walk. Most got killed, a few survived horrible hospital conditions that killed others.

Just to recall some events of those days.

July 20

I was officially sworn to AK. Although we attended cell meetings from January on, it was only on this date that our group made the oath of allegiance. We knew each other only by nicknames, which each of us choose for himself. Mine was “Bąk” which means “Bumble bee” for no particular reason; I could not think of anything else at the time.

Except for my best friend Jurek Gurzęda, I knew no one else. It was best that way. Under torture we might endanger each other’s lives. There is probably no written record of this oath-taking event anywhere. It exists only in the survivors’ memories.

August 1 Start of the Uprising

August 2

The Ukrainian SS crew proved to be tough to dislodge. After about a week, they were finally subdued. When our troops entered the building they discovered a horrible sight, the bodies of murdered Polish civilian men, babies smashed against the walls and women raped.

Two Ukrainian SS men were alive. They were taken in and tortured all night. Waldek naturally joined in and boasted later that he had shot their knee cups off. In the morning I was on guard duty outside the building. A big grave had been dug, and the two were brought out, carried by their arms and legs. As they were being carried, it sounded if they were filled with water, their insides were all loose. They were to be buried alive. I asked an officer in charge, “Sir, please shoot them” He looked at me and seeing a young kid, took out his gun and shot each man in the head. I could not stand the thought of anyone being buried alive.

Another time, when another Ukrainian SS man was caught committing crimes against civilians, he was shown where the German positions were, told to run for his life and released. The street was lined with armed AK men. He was gunned down in a shower of bullets. I did not shoot. He was a big and heavy man. As he run, he staggered and fell dead. The Ukrainian SS were brutal. We did not take any as prisoners, they were shot on the spot. The Germans did not take captured AK men as prisoners of war either. If captured, we were executed too. Nonetheless we took German Wermacht and Luftwafe soldiers as prisoners of war and they were well treated.

By the way

I do not approve of torture or killing for entertainment. I do approve of execution for war crimes, especially for crimes against civilians. Sometimes war crime is obvious and combat troops are correct to carry out justice on the spot. Other times there is a need for military trial and calling of witnesses (like AK trials conducted under the German Occupation in Poland). Justice delayed is justice denied.

Under combat conditions justice must be swift. There is no time and there are no conditions for delay.

After World War II, thousand upon thousands of war criminals escaped any consequences whatsoever. They were Nazi or Communist executioners, torturers, rapists and looters. Why? Because of our insistence on complicated trials and evidence, which is impractical to collect for such a huge number of criminals. Only the top Nazi leaders were persecuted, and at a cost of millions of dollars.

What is wrong with our legal system?

What is the Biblical view of justice?

*Deuteronomy 19:21 Show no pity: **life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.***

*17:6 **On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.***

*Romans 13:1 **Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.***

*13:3 **For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then **do what is right** and he will commend you***

Do we need elaborate trials? No! If we have 2 or 3 reliable witnesses

Do we need to deliberate on a sentence? No! Life for life, etc.

Who is the authority? Anyone appointed rightfully to be in charge

Would Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini need a trial? No! There was overwhelming evidence of their guilt

That is why I believe that in a combat situation, when someone is caught in the act of crime, those in charge have moral authority to execute justice right on the spot. I do not believe in mitigating circumstances, mental disorder or any other excuse. You did it - pay the consequences. I do not believe in individuals taking justice into their own hands - only those in authority can administer justice.

If you have a problem with capital punishment (and I do not), then make sure the criminal will never be free unless radically changed and incapable of being a threat to society. Good luck - this is a mission impossible!

The Polish AK command was made up of pre-war officers, and they played by the rules. Any executions ordered during the occupation were preceded by military trials, even though the accused was absent, his case would be defended by a lawyer. Being next to the command, I was able to observe the high ranking officers and I saw that they were in control of the troops.

August 10

Jasna Str. 10 got hit by "cows," German rocket launchers that shot about 10 phosphorus-loaded projectiles to start fires. This rocket launcher produced a sound like the mewing of a herd of cows. When we got there we found about 10 burned bodies, which we carried on stretchers for burial. We had to wear gloves because of greasy stuff on the bodies.



August 21

Retake of Pasta. Pasta presented a treacherous threat in our part of town. Armed with about 150 German soldiers, it housed many snipers, who, because of the height of the building, had a commanding view of this part of town, presenting constant threat to our movement.

With the fall of Pasta, we got a great deal of ammunition and weapons. Over 150 rifles (I got one and so did many others in my unit)

Pasta building During this time there was a lot of hand combat, house-to-house, close range fighting with machine guns, pistols and grenades. I did not take part in these actions, but heard stories back in at quarters. Many AK from my company lost their lives. On one occasion, our troops were attacking a house across a street, which was heavily defended. An officer ordered one soldier to run across the street and throw an explosive into a window. The soldier began to carry out his orders, got shot halfway through the street and fell down next to a burning tank. He screamed as the heat of the fire burned him. No one could get to him to pull him out. The officer ordered the next man to run. This man too got shot. The officer ordered another man to do the same. This time the soldier drew his gun and said "You do it, show us how it is done". The officer changed his mind and tried a different strategy.

By the way

Many of the AK men had no arms. Others, like myself and my colleagues from our cell, had little training. I suspect that while experienced and well-armed AK soldiers would be stationed in windows to exchange fire with the enemy, it was the inexperienced AK fighters who were dared to do highrisk operations. How else could you explain the four experienced fighters from my company surviving without a scratch? On the first day of the Uprising we were dared to retrieve a weapon from a dead German soldier, in broad daylight, under heavy fire, and at a considerable distance away. Other times AK fighters were ordered to run across the street, under fire, to throw grenades into German positions. These were highrisk operations - no wonder so many got killed. I suspect that is how my best friend got killed, just minutes after arriving on the battlefield.

In our quarters some men slept, some prepared for active duty, others came from combat duty. There was noise and commotion, but we were so tired we slept anyway. I had deep sleep; Waldek tested just how deep it was once by firing a gun next to my ear. I did not wake up, but I could not hear out of that ear the next day. Once, while others thought I was sleeping, I overheard them talking about what they thought of different men. When they talked about me they said "Bağ" is OK. I was pleased. Inside me, I was often scared, but the fear did not paralyse me. I was able to do my job. It was good to know that experienced fighters thought a kid like me was OK!

August 29

With the retaking of police headquarters we got hold of police uniforms and a lot of us got new clothes to replace our worn out civilian clothes. Even though my tarpaulin suit was tough, crawling in the dirt, bombings, dust and smoke left their mark. With the new uniforms, we all looked alike. Later, we went to prisoner of war camps wearing those

uniforms.

September 2

Fall of the Old City. This historical part of town, together with the ancient royal castle was separated from the rest of the Uprising. As its fate became unavoidable, AK troops tried desperately to escape and join other parts of the resistance. Many crossed through underground sewers waste deep in poo. Germans would throw explosives into sewer manholes making passage risky, others would throw in cement to raise the liquid level and drown those inside. At our end, we would help survivors climbing up through the manholes and give them water to clean up. Many never made it. Some got lost in the maze of piping that was the sewer network. I thought of the Jewish bodies washed out on the River Vistula banks, during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. We heard many horror stories from the survivors.

One whole company, dressed in German uniforms, and singing German songs, marched in the night, through the German lines to our side. Having a foreign German accent was not a problem, as there were so many foreign nationalities fighting alongside the Germans.

By the way – about the sewers

From the end of August, sewers were used as the final evacuation route for partisans and civilians, and for regular courier traffic. The most successful Old Town evacuation enabled 5300 people (including 150 German POWs) to escape into City Centre and Żolibórz.

Not until late August did the Germans realize that the partisans were travelling through the sewers. The Germans then tried to disrupt the traffic through the sewers by throwing in hand grenades, pouring in acrid gas, laying mines, building obstacles by emptying cement bags into sewers, and dumping and igniting gasoline. At the end of September, 150 evacuating Mokotów defenders accidentally exited into a German-held area and were executed on the spot.



Large sewer tunnel



Warning – Germans above!



Emerging from underground sewer

People emerging from sewers were smelly and dirty. Those rescued from collapsed buildings were gray, covered all over with dust (that is how I looked after the incident described in my book as Miracle No. 4). In both cases there was the need for a shower and proper washing of clothes. However, there was shortage of water. You can only imagine the sanitary problems that existed.

It was during this time that Mokotów (where my sister was) fell. I heard her story years later from her husband, since she had died before I could see her. The Germans lined up all captured AK personnel, soldiers, nurses and all for execution. A German officer

motioned my sister to escape and covered a hole in the wall by standing in front of it. My sister slipped away while the others were killed. She took off the white-and-red armband, and in her own clothes, walked with the civilian population to a camp to which they were sent. This German officer, was he a Christian or an angel? God had His protective hand around both of us.

By the way

The German Nazi troops, did not observe the Geneva Convention and resorted to many criminal acts. My distant relative, the wife of Jan Sobieski was a WW I nurse. She belonged to AK and in the first day of the Warsaw Uprising, in Żoliburż, wearing the red cross band of a nurse, went openly to attend to a wounded AK soldier in plain view of the enemy. (Under Geneva Convention she could not be shot at). She was killed instantaneously. Her two-year-old daughter (who had followed her) was wounded, but managed to run to safety.

Nazi SS used civilians in front of their advancing troops, executed captured AK fighters, attacked hospitals, committed mass execution of both AK fighters and civilians (men, women and children). They showed no mercy to anyone.

I cannot speak for the German Wehrmacht (regular German army). All I know is that AK treated Wehrmacht prisoners according to the Geneva Convention, and AK command trusted the Wehrmacht enough to demand that we surrender to them.

September 3

Moniuszki Str. 11 was hit by a bomb during the night while some AK men slept there. Amidst the smoke and dust, some felt their way towards the stairway and fell to their death as the stairs were gone. Two men got stranded on a balcony. Someone got a rope and threw it to them. As the flames got closer, each man slid down the rope only to get their hands scraped to the bone.

I remember going for water to a recaptured Pasta building, deep in the underground basement where a hand operated well was installed. There were a few of us, and Waldek was with us. As we were filling the containers Waldek got the idea to shoot a gun in this cramped space. The bullet ricocheted from one wall to another. Fortunately no one was hit. Waldek was a crazy lad. Later Waldek and I shared a lot of common experiences. I became his sidekick. He would tell all these stories, true but slightly exaggerated, and he would say, "if you don't believe me ask Bąk, he was there." (The next day "Big Berta" hit the very spot we got water from, and many AK people died there.) But on the day that we were down there, AK personnel doing strategic planning filled the basement passages with communication equipment and maps.

Waldek was my age, well build, blonde and handsome. He once was featured on the front cover of "Hitler Jugend" German magazine, as a typical Germanic specimen. He was Polish to the core, brave but crazy. He had no fear at all. He was from the original part of the company. He would tell stories about how he executed Polish traitors collaborating with the Nazi. On one occasions, a young woman who had been given a death sentence by the AK military court was ordered by AK men to get into a shower (not to stain anything with blood). They shot her there. Waldek was always a centre of fun, jokes and laughter. He was a great guy. Later he returned to Poland, he missed Polish girls. I

cannot see how he could have expressed his personality in a foreign language. He was reckless, living from day-to-day without a thought for tomorrow. He loved women and they loved him too.

In my book “God’s Leading in My Life” on page 31 I mention
“Miracle No. 4 – Bombed by Stukas dive bombers”

September 9

On this morning, German Sztuka dive bombers, attacked our part of town. My orders were to keep civilians under cover so as not to attract attention. At some point I heard Sztuka bomber diving towards us. I hurried everyone into a room next to the doorway leading to the street and huddled myself inside the door frame. My job was to protect the others, not to look after my own safety. Sure enough the bomber released three bombs. They hit our building; the noise and dust of the explosion threw me off my feet. I lost my helmet and rifle. The ceiling started caving in. The people inside rushed out stepping right over me with their boots. I tried to crawl inside to recover my gun and helmet. I had to give up or else I would have suffocated. (I was the last to crawl out of there) My hair was a bundle that later had to be shaved off; it would not untangle. I was dusty all over, you could only see my eyes. The face, hair and cloths were gray. I noticed later that the skin around my left knee was punctured, as if something had penetrated the skin, but I had no pain and the knee functioned normally so I never gave it another thought. Months later, when in the prisoner of war camp, a few small fragments of brick came up to the surface and the wound closed up. Apparently the explosion had thrust rubble into my knee. I was lucky it did not become inflamed. To this day I have scars, by now hardly visible. When I say I got through the Uprising without a scratch, this is the one exception.

By the way

I never found out how many civilians got trapped in the rubble. I hope they all got out. I was in a state of shock; too busy cleaning up to know what was going on. Later, I heard no reports of casualties. No one was reported missing. But this fact did not stop Waldek from using this example as part of his exaggerated accounts of the Warsaw Uprising. Pointing to me he would declare “Here is Bąk, a hero! He killed 50 people in the Uprising.” Listeners would invariably ask “Germans?” to which Waldek would reply “No! Our own, Poles!” But that was Waldek. He always exaggerated. On the other hand if these civilians had not taken cover, they would have all died. My knee was a witness to that reality.

September 18

A fleet of Allied bombers flying at high altitude passed over Warsaw dropping arms, ammunition and supplies on parachutes. But it was too late. Our forces, by now controlled only a fraction of the territory we had started with. Most of the drop fell into enemy hands. It was a good gesture but that is all it was. Russians refused to allow the Allies to land in their territory to refuel, so the planes had to refuel in Greece or somewhere else. The Allies never repeated this attempt as it proved too costly and ineffective.

As we AK freedom fighters were busy doing our thing, the Civilian population - the young, old, children, babies and families - hid in basements trying to survive. They were dying from bombs, driven out of their homes by the fires, and suffered tremendous hardships. Two hundred thousands Poles died in the nine weeks of the Uprising. Yet all the time, we had the total support of the civilian population. On one occasion, a woman of questionable reputation saw a rip in my pants and offered to fix it, which she did. I had nothing to give her. But I wrote a poem for her as a memory, and she was deeply moved by it.

By the way

Regarding the plight of the civilian population during the Warsaw Uprising. They were heroes. They suffered hunger, awful sanitary conditions, isolation and fear. They died in great numbers. But they always supported us. Hiding in basements, they never knew who would pass through the underground passages, friend or foe. Battles were fought in many places. In darkness, soldiers on both sides used grenades to clear the way before entering the dark spaces. Remember there was no electricity, no heat, running water or washroom facilities. In cramped conditions, seniors, children, babies and parents lived for two months in basements of buildings that were still standing. Basements offered protection against sniper fire and fragments of exploding artillery shells, but not against airplane bombs or the railway supergun. Once bombed, fires started, many died and survivors would have to search for shelter in other, already overcrowded places.

Many civilians helped fight fires, digging for survivors after bombings, building barricades or cooking and carrying supplies. Not everybody liked hiding in the basements and doing nothing, some would rather have been busy. Civilians often emerged from the basements in times of relative peace and were free to move in their immediate neighbourhood. Our relationship with the local population was friendly and mutually supportive. Whenever possible we shared whatever new sources of supplies were available. Their movements were restricted during air bombings, at night or between different parts of town.

At the end of the Uprising the civilian population ended up in concentration camps, which were even worse. (My sister shared their lot.)

I will never look down on people after what I have seen. Prostitutes risked their lives to tend to the wounded. On the other hand, respectful citizen plundered stores and stuffed their suitcases with stolen valuables, as if there would be a way to retrieve them later. Little children threw Molotov Cocktails at tanks.

I remember a couple, an officer and his wife, looking very respectable. There were rumour that they plundered stores and filled a suitcase full of valuables. I have no idea how they expected to get it out of Warsaw (nobody really expected the Warsaw Uprising to end the way it did). In general AK protected private property and took only food or supplies they needed. However there were looters, and our job was to stop looting by requiring passwords for anyone moving around town. This couple used their privileged status and abused it. In our quarters there was a jewellery store that remained locked until the capitulation of Warsaw. Only then did our command opened it, and distributed the contents between survivors. It would have been looted by the Germans anyway. I got one Tissot watch and a stopwatch. Later Germans found and confiscated the stopwatch, but I

managed to smuggle the watch and later traded it for part of a Red Cross parcel. It saved my life.

Moving across streets was always risky. We had to do it constantly, moving supplies, carrying the wounded and going to and from our positions. We were always under sniper fire, as well as frequent shelling, mortar and rocket projectiles. We crossed street across trenches next to barricades, wove our way along basements and the ruins of buildings. We stooped down and ran. You would see all kinds of casualties. Once I remember seeing lady's leg, in a silk stocking and high heel. I cringed thinking of the pain the explosion torn limb must have caused.

Hurrying through basements we would catch the frightened looks of civilians, men, women and children. They never knew who would show up next, friend or foe. They were short of water, food and everything else. Every so often, our troops would secure some magazines of supplies and the civilians would join us replenishing their dwindling resources. At least we were busy. They had time on their hands to worry about their safety. The lot of civilian population in today's warfare is worse than that of soldiers and it is wrong that this is so!

I remember on one occasion going for some supplies and coming to a basement room with old women sitting there, while on a bed next to them lay a boy about 12, seriously wounded in his leg. He was sweating and moaning in pain while the women kept talking and saying he would be crippled for life if he survives at all. It struck me as a very cruel thing to say right in front of him. This memory haunted me. I knew I could end up the same way.

In the end Germans were not interested in frontal attack. If they had been, the Uprising would not have lasted two months. What they did instead was to hold their position, bomb, shell and destroy one part of town at a time. Diving bombers were a powerful weapon against us. At one point 23 of them flew over Warsaw in an effort to demoralize the civilian population and AK fighters. From then on, day after day, they took turns doing precision bombing throughout daylight hours. They did not have far to go to refuel and reload their bombs, after all they controlled Warsaw Airport and another in Okęcie. We had absolutely no defence against them. The Russian Air Force could have stopped it, they were just next door (across the river), but they did not. The Nazi strategy was to destroy the city and to starve us.

By the way

I am using the name "Nazi" deliberately, because the orders for the German battling Warsaw came from the very top, from Hitler himself. Hitler took a special interest in Warsaw. He came here after the 1939 siege of the city and showed unusual interest in Warsaw during the Warsaw Uprising. There is no denying of his hatred toward the Jews, but it is harder to understand his hatred toward Poland. He planned total extermination of the Polish nation.

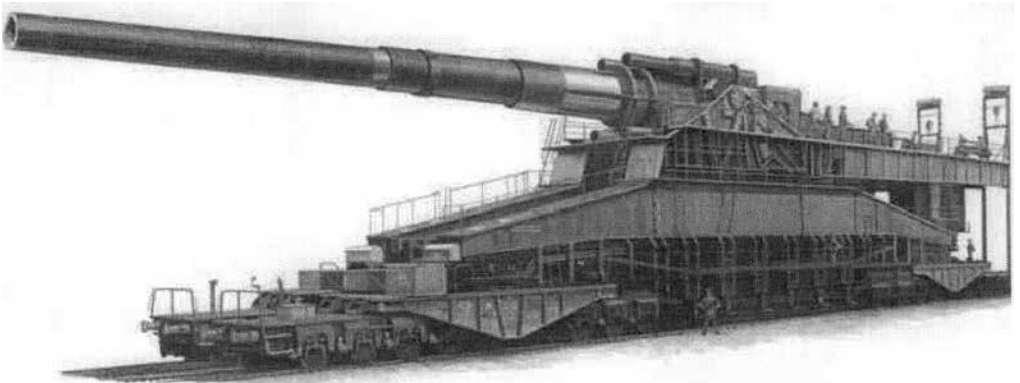


In my book “God’s Leading in My Life” I have a photo of Jurek and me at about two weeks into the Warsaw Uprising. Looking at the photo I can see how exhausted, undernourished and tired we both look. The Warsaw Uprising was very demanding physically, mentally and emotionally. We hardly had more than five hours of sleep each day, night duties, heavy physical work, constant rushing from one emergency to another. Living in constant danger, in the midst of misery, suffering and death. I can never erase those two months from my memory, they have haunted me all my life. I came out of it unharmed, but many did not. They laid down their lives for the cause, and in defence of freedom and human dignity. It is too bad that humanity has not learned the lesson and today many, throughout the world continue to die for the same cause.

In my book “God’s Leading in My Life” on page 31 I mention
“Miracle No. 5 – Bombed by a railway super gun”

A railway supergun, whom we nicknamed “Big Berta” shelling our positions

Heavy weapons that Nazis used against Warsaw Uprising



"Gustav" Krupp railway gun "Big Berta" fired 30 shots at Warsaw Uprising. It was capable of firing high explosion shells of four ton each (at long distance) and seven ton at shorter distance

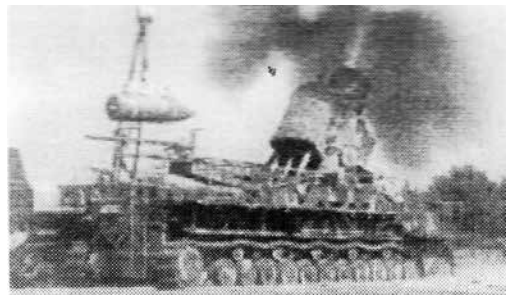


Left
"Karl Moser" caliber
600 mm. heavy mortar
capable of firing 1500
lb. shells

Right
Unexploded shell is
being measured by AK
fighter

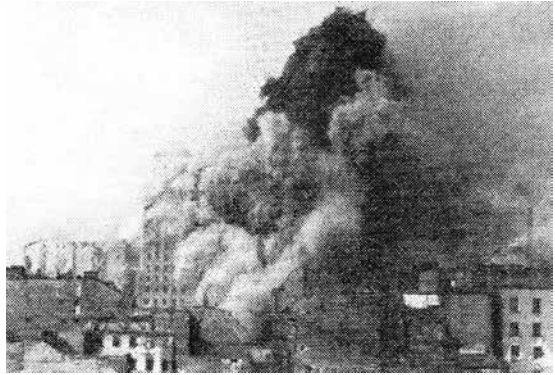


Heavy mortars and rocket
launchers shelled Warsaw
from short distance





We had no defense against German planes which had a free hand of raid after raid



German Tiger tank



German tank on the streets of Warsaw



"Goliath"



German armored vehicle captured by AK fighters



German tank captured by AK fighters

Even after Warsaw eventually capitulated, the Germans went on destroying. In fact 60 percent of all destruction happened after all fighting had stopped. Such is the hatred in the heart of man. We had a huge territory under our control with few men to cover it all. The so-called front line remained unchanged, with the occasional exchange of fire, while the main activity was surviving the bombardment, fighting fires, attending to the wounded and the dead. I took turns being on duty on the front lines and standing guard in the empty terrain behind the front line.

By the way

I will never understand how after 63 days of the Warsaw Uprising we never run out of water and food. I never missed a single meal. AK never stockpiled enough supplies to last that long. True, we occasionally accessed magazines of supplies or stores. We had to share them with the civilian population. Occasionally our kitchen would get destroyed, but it was quickly restored and meals were served, thanks to those who run them. Thanks to many civilians who did the bulk of the work.

I will never understand how we never run out of ammunition.

I will never understand how the civilian population was so supportive of us; they suffered terrible losses. After all, ten times more civilians died than AK fighters. In the end it was not a fight of the AK alone, but of the whole population of Warsaw. We fought together, side by side!

I spent many hours on guard duties. There were two types of duties that demanded endless hours of duty. The front line and guarding the territory just behind the front line, the isolated, unpopulated ruins of town. Each had its own challenges.

The front line



On the front line you had to lie down in position, observing enemy positions. There was an occasional exchange of fire but otherwise not much else went on. You had to be careful to not be seen, so as to not be shot at. There were two risks; being killed by a sniper fire and the threat of a direct attack by enemy forces, who had a huge advantage in superiority of weapons and troops. We had no chance to repel such an attack. Fortunately for us, the Germans had no interest in attacking. Time worked in their favour. Just by waiting they could starve us, while in the meantime they were bombing our positions, destroying the town and killings hundreds of people daily.



In my book “God’s Leading in My Life” on page 30 I mention an incident in which my replacement was wounded in his knee a couple of hours after I was relieved from duty.

As for hospitals, there was a shortage of beds, medicine, nurses, doctors, water, food and everything else. No electricity, running water or any other necessities for care of the wounded or sick. Wounded people lined the sides of the streets, on stretches, in the open. They cried for water and painkillers, and no one cared.

Everybody was busy rushing around doing their job, not knowing if they themselves might next be shot. Many times I passed by wounded people, under orders to be quick, unable to help them. Where would I find water, except by making big detours? To be wounded was far worse than to be killed. It was a slow death in the most horrifying conditions.

The number of wounded exceeded the system's capacity to treat them. Limbs were often amputated rather than repaired. Many operations were performed without anesthetics. People died because of simple infections. Heaps of amputated limbs lay close to the hospitals. That is why I prayed "Lord, let me be killed rather than wounded"

Guarding terrain behind the front line

Another duty was to guard the terrain - of isolated, unpopulated ruins - just behind the front line. I would be posted in the middle of nowhere, all by myself and poorly armed. My job was to look for any attempt by German patrols to penetrate our porous defence lines. We feared snipers getting in and out of our territories. At any time, someone could surprise you by suddenly sneaking up on you. It was a dangerous situation to be in, as you could not count on being backed up by others in case of trouble. It was easy to misjudge enemy forces for our own, as AK fighters often wore German uniforms, helmet and all. Standing in the open would guarantee that they would spot you before you could spot them. You could be on such guard for six to eight hours, night or day.

During the Uprising, many were killed or wounded. Our company command decided that any medals for bravery or promotions to a higher rank would go to the dead rather than the living. It was a small reward for paying the high price of giving up your life. So even the bravest among us, such as the three brothers or Waldek had no medals to show for their bravery. Not so with other units. After the capitulation, some units walked out decorated with numerous medals, there were no privates among them. They were all promoted to a higher rank. What was going on? By comparison we had nothing. But we had our lives and the pride of being okey!

Many wounded would ask their comrades to shoot them rather than take them to a hospital. On one occasion a soldier was hit in the head and was bleeding profusely. He asked to be killed. Another soldier was ready to shoot when a passing doctor intervened. He examined the wounded and found it to be only a flesh wound that would heal easily. A close call!

In the dying days of the Uprising, troops were depleted. There was a need for help and even inexperienced men were sought out. I remember, returning after hours of guard duty, tired and weary, and finding our quarters destroyed. Our unit had to move to a new location. We picked up what was left of our belongings and were on the move when a call came for a volunteer for a battle going on in the "Nowy Świat" district. I thought about it, but I was so tired, lacked combat training and did not know how to use a rifle. I would have gone had I been given a direct order, but I did not volunteer. Jurek Gurzęda did. He gave me his belongings to look after until he returned. On arrival at our new location we

were told Jurek had been killed minutes after arriving at his post. I wondered, what crazy job he was asked to do? I never saw his body or found out how he died (I asked how he died - they would not tell.) I felt guilty. Jurek was my best friend. We had been in school together, I had enlisted him to AK and we served on AK missions together. I was devastated! Like me, he had good intentions, but was not fit for the task. Maybe we should not have even been there. What was the use of fighting with good intentions? From then on, throughout my life, whatever job I undertook, I trained for it with all my might first. I need to be able to do it, and do it well.

I did shoot once, though at the very end of the Uprising. I got a rifle and fired a practice shot at the nose of a stone lion, high at roof level. I hit the target. I knew this gun was the one that I would die with. I realized I had better know how to use it.

Earlier, the Old city, Mokotów and Wola were overrun by German troops. AK fighters died in battle or were executed after capture. That is what would have happened to me if I had been there.

Towards the very end of the Uprising the north part of downtown Warsaw, where I was, became deserted. The next German thrust was going to be against us.

In my book “God’s Leading in My Life” on page 31 I mention
“Miracle No. 6 – Awaiting the final attack on north downtown Warsaw”

I was ready to die. There really was no chance to survive. It was a hopeless situation. There were few of us left, we were short of ammunition and had no heavy weapons. We waited and waited for the attack. No one told us anything about what was going on. But the anticipated attack never came. Warsaw capitulated instead.

By the way

In the Warsaw uprising, in my mind, I died a dozen times. Somehow God never let it be. He had other plans for me. I hope I did not disappoint Him too much. I never received any psychological counselling after the Uprising. I left Warsaw with deep psychological wounds. It took many years for them to heal, which may explain in part, some of my difficulties later in life. Explain - yes, but never excuse, after all I am responsible for my own actions. Maybe those wounds got healed, may be not, however the memories remain forever.

The plight of the civilians

The AK command negotiated for the AK forces’ full military recognition, under the Geneva pact. (In Chapter 4, I will describe what happened to us – AK rank and file soldiers.)

Not so for the Warsaw civilian population. Their rights were not as clearly defined. They would go to a transit camp from which they were supposed to be released.

It seems to me that the negotiators were concerned more about the military than about the civilians. We got a sweet deal, not so for the others. The civilians were treated worse than

us. Many ended up in concentration camps or in slave labour camps. It was a disgrace!

During the Warsaw Uprising 150,000 – 180,000 of civilian lost their lives. Almost 10 times more than the AK fighters. What a tremendous sacrifice! The uprising ended up in the destruction of about 35 percent of the most densely populated, Centrum of Warsaw. In 1943 about 10 percent of the city was totally destroyed during the Ghetto Uprising. Overall about 50 percent of the city was leveled to the ground. The Warsaw survivors lost all their material possessions. The outskirts of Warsaw were less affected, some almost untouched.

During the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, the Nazis created a large transit camp in Pruszków on the site of the train repair shops to intern the evacuees expelled from the capital. Around 550,000 Warsaw residents and approximately 100,000 from the city's outskirts were incarcerated in the Durchgangslager 121 set up for this purpose. The SS and Gestapo segregated the victims before transport. Approximately 650,000 Poles passed through the Pruszków camp in August, September and October 1944.

Approximately 55,000 were sent to concentration camps, including 13,000 to Auschwitz. They included people from a variety of social classes and occupations (government officials, scholars, artists, physicians, merchants, and blue-collar workers) in varying physical conditions (the injured, the sick, invalids, and pregnant women) and of various ages from infants only a few weeks old to the elderly, aged 86 or more. In a few cases, these were also people of different ethnic backgrounds including Jews living on "Aryan papers."

This is what happened to my sister. After the fall of Mokotów and the miraculous escape from being executed by the Nazis, she walked out with the civilian population, ending up in Pruszków. Here she contracted malaria, no doubt from someone who brought it from Africa. This sickness would trouble her for years. From Pruszków she was sent to Dresden for slave labour. Arriving at the Dresden railway station, they found themselves under an Allied bombing attack. In general confusion, she and some of her friends managed to escape and change trains. The new train brought them to Kraków, where she stayed in her girlfriend's home hiding from the authorities. After the war in 1945, she was able to return home to my aunt's apartment in Praga on the east side of River Vistula. Again, the plight of the civilian population was much worse than that of the military.

On October the 5th our company, or rather what was left of it, marched out, fully armed and surrendered to the German Wehrmacht.

1945 Warsaw after the war





The Polish people rebuilt Warsaw from the ruins of destruction. The Old City was restored to what it was before. The royal castle, bridges across the river, sewers, power lines – everything needed replacement. Main artery streets got widened, yet most of the city streets remained unaltered. Unfortunately, the corner of Marszałkowska and Moniuszki streets, where I was stationed during the Uprising – changed completely. In 1995, during my first visit to Poland, I hurried to this spot to relive my memories only to be deeply disappointed - it was gone.

Today Warsaw is a modern city. Except for the early reconstruction work under Communism, which was of low quality, all subsequent work was good.

Poland had no Marshal plan, no help from abroad. Warsaw was not the only place in Poland where there was so much damage. Imagine the sacrifices Polish people had to make to return to normal life.



Tina took this picture of me in 2010 while visiting the Royal Castle in the Old City of Warsaw.
The picture shows Warsaw as it was in 1947 – in ruins!

In 1995, my first visit to Poland, I applied for recognition of my combatant status. After reviewing my documents proving my participation in the Warsaw Uprising all papers were approved within one hour. I was told that if every applicant had proof like mine their job would be easy. Apparently many applicants have hardly any proof. I wonder how many

lied or falsified proof.

The Museum of the Warsaw Uprising did not know that my sister was an AK nurse in Mokotów during the Uprising. How many others have been forgotten? Were there any records kept during the 1939 – 1945 occupation of Poland? Were there searches made through German records of POW and other camps? Are there efforts going on now to uncover this information? Germans were meticulous in collecting and preserving such records. There must be photos of individual prisoners. How valuable would they be to the survivors or to the families of those who perished!

As for my papers, I have none from the Warsaw Uprising. I wonder if records were kept, and how many of them were rescued from the ruins of Warsaw or passed personal searches after the fall of Warsaw. All I could prove was that I was taken from the Uprising as a prisoner of war, after the fall of Warsaw. I had witnesses from the Uprising and for the years that followed.

In 2014 I was invited by the City of Warsaw to take part in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. As I was there I observed distinguished members of AK, survivors of the Warsaw Uprising. Many had medals of all sorts. How could they prove they were awarded to them? After the war, 1945 and till 1990, under Communism, AK fighters hid their AK affiliation because of persecution. How could anyone verify their claims? I am sure many were genuine fighters, many at a high command level. I wondered however, how many among them were swindlers and pretenders. Every war produces both.

During this celebration I talked to an AK member, a lady, who at the time was 13 years old. She had helped in a hospital. Another man was 12 years old, offered to do some dangerous task, got slightly wounded, and after a while joined the unit and served in the Uprising. Both were civilians who joined and took part in the Uprising. Later on, in POW camps some of these kids were with us, although I do not remember anyone younger than 14.

I am glad I fought in the Warsaw Uprising. It made me who I became and who I am now. It made me a deep thinker. It made me appreciate life, love nature and pursue purpose in life.

Poems I wrote during the Warsaw Uprising.

“Dziękuję” do cywilnych kobiet, ochotniczek w powstaniu

Przyrzekłem Ci słów kilka skreślić miła pani
Słów poddyktowanych wdzięcznością za serce
Które Ci podszepnęło, byś złożyła w dani
Dla dobra wspólnej sprawy, spracowane ręce
 My wszyscy, których nas swoją pracą wspomagałaś
 W podziękę biorąc od nas to skromne “dziękuję”
 My wszyscy by wiedziano jako pracowałaś
 W tych rymach mówimy, co nam serce czuje
Żołnierz nakazem jest walczyć zawiązać
Dowódcy, tą walką kierować
Cywila, normalna praca jest zajęciem
Nakazem wszystkich – współpracować
 Ty Polko ten nakaz dobrze zrozumiałaś
 Dla innych ty byłaś przykładem
 Miłości Ojczyzny dowody nam dałaś
 Tą pracą, tym swoim zapałem
Więc kończę swe myśli, które nieudolnie
W tym wierszu skreśliłem dla Ciebie
Raz jeszcze dziękuję za to, żeś nas chojnie
Wspomogła w wojennej potrzebie

Warsaw 1944

The occasion really was quite trivial and embarrassing for me. Working on building barricades against tanks – I got a huge rip in my pants. A lady of ill repute, offered to sew my pants. I had no money or anything else to give her. I would not accept this favour without giving her something in return. While I waited (with no pants on) I wrote her this short poem. It proved to be the best gift I could have given her. I remember, when she read it, she had tears in her eyes. I don't know if she survived the Uprising, but if she did – that would have been her treasured possession. I will always respect humanity in any human being.

This poem I wrote in the last week of the Warsaw Uprising. We were entrenched on the front line awaiting attack by tanks and artillery and a certain death (Miracle No. 6)

Los

Nie ma komu zbadać losu kaprysy
Który jak wicher porywa w dal
Mąci obranej drogi zarysy
Na karcie życia czyni zapisy
 co gaszą życia czar
U progu wędrówki, zrazu niepewny
W końcu poznaje człowiek swój cel
Żyje jak pielgrzym wierny
Swojemu szczęściu i w radzie pewny
 co poznał w niem

Fate

Who can tell where fate will take you
Fate, like a storm, can take you far out
It can confuse your plans for life
Or your life story can make changes
 that wreck life's beauty
At the start of life, first undecided
At last, you find your goal
You live dedicated to it
Convinced of happiness and purpose
 you find for yourself

Łatwym by było bez przeszkód życie
Lecz tu jak wichur burzy bieg fal
Przybywa los, podstępnie, skrycie
Rzuca przeszkody, co paczą życie
twarde jak stal
Bąć silny bracie, twardy i wierny
Tak jak cię uczy życie co dnia
Choć los zgłował ci cios śmiertelny
Zgiń niepokony i nieśmiertelny
bo taka wola twa

Life would be easy without obstacles
But, here comes storm that wrecks your plans
Fate arrives, secretly, treacherously
Brings obstacles, that change our life path,
tougher than steel
Be strong brother, tough and faithful
Just as life teaches us each day
Though fate has given you a mortal blow
Fall as a free man, do not surrender
for such is your will

Wspomnienia powstania

Strzały, ogień i bomby
Czołgi i huk i trupy
Jakby piekne trąby
Rozdarły powietrze
Jakby pociski chciały
Rozbić i te grupy straceńców
Co pod noże nie poszły
Wabieni tak długo
I walkę miast niewoli
Szaleńcy obrali
Których siłą nie wzięto
Straceńcy - lecz teraz gdy
Wspomnę te chwile
Pot ocieram ręką
Gdy przypomnę strzały
O, jak mnie to boli
Żem widział
Żem przeszkodzić nie mógł
Jak pociski rwały
Domy stolicy mojej
Wabieni tak długo
Na zdradę i chańbę
Wybuchli by ginąć tak krwawo
O przemiń piekna szaruga
Coś zniszczyła stolicę Warszawę

Memories of Warsaw Uprising

Shots, fire and bombs
Tanks, explosions and dead bodies
As if satanic trumpets
Tore the space
As if artillery shells wanted
To scatter the groups of rebels
Who did not submit
Though tempted so long
Chose to fight rather than give up
This they chose
Who were not taken by force
Rebels – but now
As I remember
I wipe sweat with my hand
When I recall the shots
Oh, how it hurts me
That I have seen it
That I could not prevent
As the artillery shells demolished
Houses of my capital city
Tempted so long
To betray and be shamed
Exploded to die so violently
Oh, pass the satanic chaos
That demolished Capital City - Warsaw



In the Polish Consulate in Toronto, Canada - I received both medals in recognition of my participation in AK and in the Warsaw Uprising.



AK medal

Warsaw Uprising medal



During the Nazi occupation of Poland, this graffiti sign was painted all over Warsaw on government buildings, bridges, walls or wherever visible; as a sign of defiance against Nazis.

PW which was short for "Polska Walcząca" meaning "Poland is Fighting." It served as a constant reminder to the enemy of our resistance movement (AK).

CHAPTER 4 - Prisoner of war camps / End of the Second World War

From 1944 October 5th to 1945 May 5 (for 7 months) I was a prisoner of War in Austria

After the capitulation of the Warsaw Uprising, we left our positions and marched out, unit by unit, carrying our weapons and the few possessions we had left. I had a watch and a stopwatch with me from the jewellery store in our building, which at the end, our command emptied and divided the contents among us. (The Germans would only have looted it anyway). From the Allied drop, I had a small bag of sugar cubes and a container of fat (we called it monkey fat). There were only 10 of us from our company, that were able to walk out by ourselves. Others were killed or wounded. Among the 10, there were the three brothers, Waldek and I, which accounted for the half of the 10. I do not remember the names of the others.



After Warsaw capitulated we marched out to surrender

Rumour had it that the in order to get our military status recognized, the Allies had to declare us as part of the Canadian Forces. (In retrospect this seems highly unlikely.) My reaction was that one day I will be a Canadian, and that turned out to be true.

By the way

There were many rumours during the Uprising. Most of the communication was verbal. There were few official announcements or reports of the progress of the conflict. When there is lack of information, rumours spread.

One of the conditions for our surrender was that we would be met by Wehrmacht and not by SS troops, who during the Uprising, were executing captured AK fighters. We piled up our weapons in a heap and marched out in a column as directed.



To my surprise our first stop was in Orzarów, in the cable factory where my mother had worked. In 1942, I spent one summer as a summer student there, and my sister worked there up to the day of the Uprising. Local people lined all around the wire enclosure, where we were, asking for news about their relatives and so on. Some recognised me and offered to get me out. I refused saying I wanted to go west to escape the

Russians. I could have easily gained my freedom right there.



From Orzarów we were loaded onto trains, 50 people to a cattle car lined with some straw, and headed westward. The train moved slowly, made many stops, and switched lines on its way. Railways were heavily bombed and many tracks were damaged, so we made detours to our destination. I remember passing Opole.

On our way some wanted to cut a hole in the floor of our railway car and jump off to freedom. Having just refused escape in Orzarów, I had no desire to do so. Others pointed out the danger of jumping from the moving train. In the end cool heads prevailed and the idea was abandoned. We were headed for an unknown destination.

By the way

I never wanted to escape. I was convinced that the war would be soon over. I did not want to end up under Communism, if anything I would have rather fought against it. The POW camp, even though miserable, offered me an opportunity for a transition albeit to the unknown. I had no idea of what to expect in the future, what opportunities would there be or where I would end up. My attitude was - wait and see. Subconsciously, I left it in the hands of God.

Matthew 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear."

Lamsdorf, Germany, Stalag 318 VIII F Registration No. 105 168

where we stayed three weeks from 1944 10 06 to 1944 10 21



We arrived here about noon on a very hot day. We unloaded and were hurried to walk about five kilometres to the camp. The guards were very unfriendly, shouting, pushing and kicking. Things got worse when two German training airplanes collided in mid-air and fell to the ground. We gave a big cheer. The guards then became really vicious. The tempo of the march was so

fast that some people started to fall off from exhaustion. A guard pulled me and another man out of the column and ordered us to carry the fallen AK soldier. He was a big man and two of us could hardly move him. We looked around and when no one looked, we sneaked back into the crowd and went on our way leaving him behind.



On arrival in the camp we were assembled in a large square, in columns four men deep, along each side of the square, facing the center. Next a stout German sergeant arrived, stood in the middle of the square and addressed us in pure Polish language. It was a complete change of mood. He was friendly, relaxed, patronizing and joking. He addressed us as “children of

Warsaw”. Indeed among us there were some children who had taken part in the Uprising. In this camp, in a separate enclosure, there were also Polish women nurses, couriers etc.. From that time on the sergeant was in charge and he was good. I have the most precious memories from those three weeks.

In my book “God’s Leading in My Life” on page 40 I describe
the nightly concerts our talented musicians performed here

As for me, I was in a state of shock, guilty that I had not died, confused and at the same time exalted with being alive and in relative safety, away from the constant bombardment and fear of death that we had been under for the last two months.

However, at the end of these three weeks we were loaded onto railcars again and shipped to another location. At some point, while we were waiting, someone caught a little cat that somehow got in among us. The cat was killed and with the fat I had, was fried on the spot. For my contribution I got a leg with hardly any meat on it. I tasted whatever there was to eat. During these three weeks I finished my sugar (that supplemented my diet), so at the end, I started to feel hunger, which from then on became my constant companion.

AK women and our officers were separated from us and sent to other POW camps. With their departure, internal discipline problems arose. Bands formed and started to force their way around. After a while corporals and higher rank under-officers took over internal discipline and the bands disbanded.

Departing from Lamsdorf, we were selected at random, so we parted with many of our comrades from the Uprising and found ourselves with total strangers. One good thing was, that among us were many young students, intelligent and well mannered. We always kept together, away from the rougher element among us. From now on this was a standard procedure. Move every few weeks and separate from any friends you might have made. All our personal possessions were confiscated. Having musical instruments from then on was out of question. I managed to smuggle my watch through, however the stopwatch was confiscated.

Markt Pongau (gau Salzburg), Austria, M. Stammlager 317 (XVIII C)

where I stayed three weeks from 1944 10 25 to 1944 11 12

Travelling by rail to the camp we entered into the Austrian Alps. Looking through the gaps in the rail carriage I delighted in the sights and thought that just seeing that beautiful scenery was worth the hunger and cold I felt.

Some among us were boasting that they would never work for the Germans to help their war effort; they would just sit around. As for me I had no opinion. What they said sounded good but I had no idea what it would involve and determined to just wait and see. We found out that as hunger intensified everybody wanted to work in the kitchen, where you could get something extra to eat. Sitting cold and hungry was miserable and we learned that for your own sanity, work was a privilege.

By the way

This is the lesson I learned from the war - work is a privilege! Being on welfare sounds smart, but in the end it destroys your confidence, self-respect and gets you into trouble. We are not meant just to sit around. It is better to work for little rather than to do nothing, wasting time. Any work gives you some experience that can be useful later in life. Idleness leads to bad habits, addictions or crime.

The Bible teaches the same

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,

Proverbs 10:4 Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.

This lesson stayed with me all my life. Even today, at the age of 87, I use my time doing something of value that will benefit others. I never sought fun and entertainment, but pursued learning, applying knowledge to worthy causes, however insignificant my efforts might have looked to others. The best advice I can give to anyone - forget fun and entertainment. Study, learn and work to the end of your life. There is so much we do not know, especially about ourselves, what to believe, who we are, our dependence on God, family, community, our gifts and abilities.

Markt Pongau was a camp in the Austrian Alps, situated in a narrow canyon, with a stream, railway and road going through it. In the wider spots there were a railway station and our camp. On both sides there were steep rocky slopes with some places forested with evergreen trees. Many times you could not see the sun, so deep in the valley were we.

Unknown to me at that time, this would be my home camp for the winter months that were fast approaching.



The camp was surrounded with a high barbed wire fence with guard towers at all corners and some in between. The towers were manned by armed German soldiers and equipped with searchlights for the night. Inside were rows of concrete barracks. Fences, designed to keep different nationalities apart, separated blocks of barracks from each other.

Our enclosure was bordered on one side by the French, on the other side by the Americans and at the far end by the Russians. You could

move freely within the enclosure and talk to other nationalities. We spoke mostly in German, as we all knew this language a little bit.

Within a barrack along the longitudinal walls were rows of two level bunk beds from one end to the other, it was all one-bunk bed. There were no individual beds; we slept one next to the other on straw covered by a sheet. We each got one blanket. There was no bedding. We would use our outer garment as a pillow and sleep in our underwear. Because nights were cold, we spread our blankets so that each person would be covered by up to five overlapping blankets. We slept huddled up to each other. To go to the washroom, you had to climb out through the top of the blanket. There was a barrel in the barrack as a washroom for us. It had to be emptied daily. Each barrack housed about 200 prisoners.

In the morning we would wash in cold water! Brrrr. You would get a piece of bread and coffee. That was it! Bread was gluey and dark. We learned to eat it all at once, else it got hard like stone or worse, someone would steal it. Coffee was an imitation. Every five meters or so there was a coal stove in the barrack and we would gather around it for heat and to chat. If we got some raw potatoes, as some of us who worked in the kitchen occasionally had, we would slice them and stick them to the hot stovepipe to make instant potato chips. It was a miserable existence. You felt hungry, cold and bored. No wonder that after a while we would volunteer for work assignments. At least they kept us busy.

By the way

I do not remember how did we cut our fingernail or toenails. Sharp objects were forbidden, but we must have had some. Obviously there were some knives, since we cut potato slices with them. I don't thing I shaved yet, but others did. I don't remember anyone with beards. Hair cutting was another function I do not remember, but someone had to have been doing it.

My army friend, Kazik Stankiewicz-Wiśniewski told me a story about his adventures. He spent five years in a concentration camp. When he was finally liberated, he ended up in a U.S. hospital. There, a doctor asked him "Do you ever cut your toe nails?" Apparently in the concentration camp he could not.

Winter was fast approaching and we were not dressed for the frigid weather in the Austrian Alps. Someone suggested packing our clothes and shoes with newspapers, which we did. I do not remember where we got the newspapers from. We were not receiving any to read. I too, slit my coat seams, inserted layers of newspapers and sewed them back again. I lined my shoes with newspapers too and it helped. Still we were under-nourished, under-dressed and the cold was terrible, especially working outdoors, as we did later.

Barracks were plagued with louse and flees and Germans were experts in cleanliness. On arrival at the camp we all went for a shower. All our clothes were steamed. Each of us had all hair shaved off, head, underarms and genital areas. Next we got soaped by a brush with some strong disinfectant. Prisoners employed in the bathhouse performed all these tasks. Except for shaving, this routine would be performed weekly from then on. While



we took shower our barrack was fumigated and the straw was changed. The shower itself was a large room, where embarrassed or not we all took it naked. Water was really hot. After such treatment one would think no insect could survive - but think again. During the week the bugs bit and we often searched our clothes and bodies and would find some.

There were always some internal discipline problems that we had to deal with ourselves. Among us there were all kinds of people hoodlums, thieves, you name it. Each barrack had a few sergeants and corporals, older men that were unofficially in charge. Any infraction was brought forward to them. They decided on punishment and the punishment was carried out. We would not report these things to our German captors for fear that the offenders could be shipped to concentration camps - a punishment greater than the crime deserved.

The most common infraction was stealing of bread or food from Red Cross parcels that we later received. The punishment was flogging. After supper the thief would be stretched, face down on a bench, his pants down and his hands and legs tied under the bench. A wet towel was placed over his bare bottom (to prevent bruises) and he would be delivered five or 10 or whatever number of lashes. All the others, 200 strong, would stand around watching. You would think that once punished they would learn a lesson. Sure enough a couple of weeks later they would come back for more.

In our weekly provisions, each of us got some cigarettes. Since I and many others did not smoke, we traded our cigarettes for bread. We hardly had enough to live on and there were always some that would rather smoke than eat. After the war, many of the smokers got tuberculosis.

In my book "God's Leading in My Life" on page 43 I describe the 14-year AK boy, named Robinson whom U.S. POW's took care of

American prisoners of war (we did not call them U.S. POW's, but simply Americans) received Red Cross packages regularly; we did not. If the Americans were doing well, the Russians were treated the worst. It seems nobody was thinking about them. No Red Cross. They had to manage on what the camp provided alone. As for us, we were new there and it was not until February that we were visited by a representative from the Red Cross to arrange the regular delivery of Red Cross parcels to each of us. Unill then delivery was sporadic.

By the way

We truly appreciated the work done by the Red Cross. Under the miserable conditions of a POW's existence, their parcels brought so much joy into our lives. They sustained our bodies and spirit. I can think of today's war zones and I praise the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations for

reaching out to refugees, prisoners and the starving populations. Truly this is a work of compassion reflecting the very nature of God and His expectation of us all.

Psalm 116:5 The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

When things are good in our lives, we forget to be compassionate. To me it is a sign of becoming distant from God. I am as guilty of this as anyone else.

The Russian enclosure was to the east of us. In the camp, we had no access to the enclosures of other nationalities with one exception. Occasionally the Russians had a bazaar in their enclosure and we – and the other nationalities - were allowed to go there to trade. It was always evening and it ended with a Russian in charge, getting up on an elevated podium and calling, in the Russian language, the end of the proceeding. It was good that others could not understand his words. From what I could understand, he was being rude and vulgar. In effect he was saying, “If you do not belong here - get out!” and he swore saying so. Come to think of it - what type of a deal was it, for all prisoners to be allowed to mix freely?

In this camp the reality of our enslavement sunk in. The food was coffee and bread (coffee was a fake, roasted grain) and for lunch thin soup with bread. I was hungry, but at the same time, very weak. Unknown to me, I was growing and my body needed more food. When I discovered my teeth getting loose, I knew it was scurvy and I had to do something. I bartered my watch (Swiss Tissot watch) with an American soldier for a tin of orange marmalade, shoes, bread and chocolate. The food helped. My teeth recovered after a single tin of orange marmalade!

On November 1st 1944 all strength left me and I was admitted into a camp hospital where I rested and gained some strength. I had more peace there. The place was heated, and I laid on top of a bed, wrote in my diary and played solitaire with cards I found there. I remember a Russian playing a harmonica outside on one sunny day. I had my bartered supplies to help me along and food here was a little better. Without any warning, 12 days later, we were ordered to move once again and being hospitalized did not count as an excuse. Our next destination was Wolfsberg.

Wolfsberg, Stamlager (XVIII A)

where I stayed four weeks from 1944 11 13 to 1944 12 10

I was told we were no longer in Austria, but in Germany. Recently looking through the maps I doubt it. I found Wolfsberg in Austria. Marching from the railway station to the camp I was curious to see the town. It was a flat terrain, small, neat houses, some industry and some evidence of war damage. The camp itself was very spacious. In the camp we were soon joined by another transport of AK soldiers who fought in Mokotów, the part of Warsaw where, I found out later, my sister was. They came from another camp in Bremenferde. I met some people I knew and searched for news of my sister. I sent my

first letter home, which I don't think ever arrived in Warsaw. Here one of the Germans said to our elder "Now you are broken in your spirit" to which he replied "We Poles, through centuries, learned to accept the inevitable." We were impressed.

On the night of December 8 1944 there was an air raid and the town was bombed. Unexpectedly we were moved back to the camp we had just come from.

Markt Pongau (gau Salzburg), Austria, M. Stammlager 317 (XVIII C)

where I stayed only one week from 1944 12 10 to 1944 12 16

Here we reunited with some comrades we had left a month earlier. It was now winter and the camp was freezing. I volunteered for a work assignment and within a week I was shipped with a group of others to Salzburg

Salzburg, Austria, Arbait Komando 27648 GW

where I stayed five weeks from 1944 12 16 to 1945 01 27

We travelled in the middle of winter in a rail car with a stove but no coal to make it work. Salzburg was bombed systematically with the Allies dropping time bombs. The bombs buried themselves into the ground and exploded at unpredictable times. Germans used concentration camp prisoners to dig out and disarm the bombs. At Salzburg, I got some bread from a concentration camp prisoner! They were given lots of food - so dangerous was their job. We spent Christmas at the camp. Our assignment was to work on fixing sewers damaged by Allied bombs. We dug trenches to locate the damage. It was very cold and every so often we would go to an open fire to warm up. The work proceeded at a very slow pace as we used hand tools and the ground was frozen solid. The guards did not hurry us, so we took our time.

On January 12 1945 the Russians started an offensive towards Berlin. For us it was the 100th day of imprisonment. From the start of the Warsaw Uprising until this time, the Russian Army had stopped on the River Vistula. They were building up supplies for the next push westward. In the meantime, the Germans were destroying what was left of Warsaw. Such was their intensity of hatred towards Poland that they continued exploding and bulldozing anything that was left standing

By the way

I cannot understand why the Nazis spent all that energy and resources wrecking Warsaw, even though they needed everything they had to defend themselves against inevitable defeat. What was the sense of it? It had no strategic significance at all. Their own country was being ceaselessly bombarded. They were under attack from all sides and yet they were trying to destroy Poland as much as they could. Why? What hatred!

On January 18 1945 I received a Red Cross package with food, soap etc. One soldier from the Berling Army (Polish Army under Russian command) tasted the white soap thinking it was chocolate. These soldiers were from remote villages and were unfamiliar with

modern conveniences. They spoke a more primitive Polish language and their vocabulary was poor compared to the affluent Warsaw city kids who, like myself were students. They felt somewhat isolated from the rest of us, which is a pity because they deserved better.

On January 20 our barracks, situated in the middle of a triangle of railway tracks got bombed and I lost my Red Cross package! Heavy bombings continued. During my stay here most of Salzburg was destroyed - and we had thought that here we were safe! Fortunately when the air raid alarm went off we were marched into tunnels in the rocky mountains where we were safe. On one occasion I was almost stamped to death. We were inside the tunnel packed like sardines in a can, when a nearby explosion knocked the lights out. As we stood, suddenly a sizzling noise started and someone called "Gas!". There was a panic, the crowd surged, and I was knocked down to the ground and trampled on by a running mob. Just as suddenly it all stopped. I got up without a scratch.

In my book "God's Leading in My Life" on page 43 I describe this incident as "Miracle No. 7 - 1944 - in Salzburg, Austria during the Allied bombing attack"

By the end of January we returned to our base camp. On February 1 the Russian offense stopped.

Markt Pongau (gau Salzburg), Austria, M. Stammlager 317 (XVIII C)

where I stayed six weeks from 1945 01 27 to 1945 03 08

Here, almost every night we hear the bombing of nearby cities. Often, captured US pilots and crews from shot down American bombers were brought to camp and put in the American enclosure next to ours. What a change! Yesterday they had been in London dining in expensive clubs, today they were prisoners of war. The Germans had a lot of respect towards the Americans. By that time everybody knew the war was lost for Germany. Some still hoped for a secret weapon Hitler talked about. I assume it would be an atomic bomb, but even if the Germans managed to use one, the Allies would not capitulate. They had complete control of the air, and nothing was safe on the ground. The newly captured American prisoners of war had their heads up, they were not humiliated but self-assured. They were still wearing their leather pilot jackets when brought to camp. Mind you, in a couple of weeks the misery of the camp would get to them too.

February 11 1945 we put up a show "Warsaw evening" to which we invited our German guards. I operated the stage curtain and Waldek told jokes in the role of a comedian. I laughed so hard, that I was late closing the curtain. He whispered "Bak, curtain!" to alert me. In one act where only legs were visible, I wore lady's stocking and high heels. A group of us pretended there were ladies in camp. At the final curtain, a man made a curtsy by bending, backwards with his pants down. It got a standing ovation from our guards.

By February we were visited by a Red Cross representative and began getting Red Cross parcels regularly, which helped to raise our spirits.

March 5 1945 an avalanche stopped a train. Two-hundred of us are called for rescue operation in bitter cold of the winter. Luckily, I was not called.

Next, together with others, I was shipped to another work assignment.

Tshubach near Landek, Austria, Arbait Komando

where I stayed seven weeks from 1945 03 11 to 1945 05 01

Tshubach camp was west of Innsbruck, close to where the borders of Austria, Switzerland and Italy meet, about six kilometres from the Swiss border. There were about 200 of us and we were building a railroad, in the very early construction stage, just raising an embankment through a deep mountain canyon. When we arrived there, no one else was there at the time, but construction was already started.

Spring was in the air. Snow was on the ground but quickly melting. It was peaceful in the mountains. Our guards were Volksturm, German men over 70 years of age, mostly retired farmers, who had no interest in the war at all. We had a deal with our guard. He slept, with his gun on the side and we watched for the corporal. If we spotted the corporal approaching we would wake up our guard. The corporal was busy trying to make us do some work. We mostly stood around producing about five wagons of fill a day. A narrow gauge rail took the wagons, at a slight incline, to where they had to be unloaded. A crew of about four of us had a job to load our wagon, push the train for unloading onto a trestle scaffold, where we unlocked the bolt and dumped the fill down into the canyon. I wonder about the strength of such an embankment; it was not compacted at all, there would be a lot of settling after completion.

After a while the poor corporal, unable to get any results, proposed a deal to us. Double your output and you can finish and go to your barracks as soon as you do. We answered yes. Our target was 10 wagons of fill a day. From that time on we worked like the dickens. By 1:00 pm. we would be done, and sure enough we were returned to our barracks where we basked in the sun.

These were the dying days of the war. All you had to do was wait and you would be free. Strangely enough two from our group escaped during the night. We found out during the morning head count. It did not make much sense. Why? The Swiss border was heavily guarded and going through was next to impossible. Naturally, the corporal, two guards and a dog, went out looking for them. By evening they came back empty handed. Rumour had it they had shot them. We will never know.

As POW's we were always hungry. We simply did not get enough food to satisfy our hunger. Prolonged hunger produces weakness, lack of energy, exhaustion, feeling cold and listless. To deal with these symptoms, a few among us collected snails, boiling them to supplement their diet. Most of us questioned the wisdom of doing so, but they would not listen. I for one would not eat them, not all snails are edible. Later on, after the war,

some of them suffered from stomach pains. Of the others, some smokers developed tuberculosis. As for me I did not suffer any adverse health consequences, although growing under those conditions must have resulted in weaker bone structure.

On 29th of March 1945 our Volkstorm guards were suddenly replaced by Ukrainian SS guards. The Allies were advancing and liberating most of Germany by that time. The SS troops were retreating and moving now to that remote area. We heard rumours of SS troops executing prisoners of war. Local, civilian authorities were not too happy with the SS troops, fearing reprisals from the Allies once they arrived, but there was not much they could do.

Everything went smoothly until we completed our quota of 10 wagons and began to get ready to quit. The SS would not go along with our deal. Back to work we were ordered. Our leaders argued. Frankly I thought we should not look for a fight because of what we knew about the SS. Hot heads prevailed and we refused a direct order to go back to work. We were ordered to form into a column three men in a row. I found myself somewhere in the middle of the column. All of a sudden, those in the front of the column started to retreat to the back of the column. Obviously whoever was in the front row would be first to suffer consequences. It looked shameful; they were running like a bunch of cowards, hiding behind others and all this in plain view of the enemy. We could see the grin on their faces, so we decided, “We will not run”. We three stood our ground. That is one thing I could be depended on for during the Warsaw Uprising. I was not much of a hero, but I would not run.

In my book “God’s Leading in My Life” on page 44 I describe this incident as
“Miracle No. 8 – 1945 in Tshubac, Austria where I was ‘executed’”

When the dust settled down, who do you think ended in the front row? We three! Sure enough the three of us were ordered to step up in front of some trees. We faced an execution squad with rifles pointing at us ready to shoot. No blindfolds, no handcuffs, just as we were. While the officer in charge was getting ready to give the order to shoot, I caught a glance of a branch of a balsam fir tree. What a beautiful part of God’s creation, I felt it was such a pity to die so young in my life. The Balsam fir tree, symbol of Christmas, would mean that much more to me from then on. The shots were fired, Looking at our executioners, I saw the puffs of smoke from their rifles and nothing, no pain, and I did not fall. With my hands, I felt my body for traces of blood, and found none. I stood in amazement. We were ordered to go back to the front of the column. The date was April 5 1945.

As I stood awaiting death my last look was on a Balsam tree branch. That picture remained a symbol to me, for the rest of my life, of miraculous saving and of the grace of God. I love nature and on my walks the Balsam tree



is always the symbol of God, a constant reminder of what He did in my life.

We were executed all right. Somebody did not bother to tell us that we were to be shot at with blank bullets. It shook me! It was a scare tactic to make us submit. Since we did not, they would choose another punishment. Blanks or not, I died there all the same. It was the same feeling, the deep sorrow, the hopelessness and the agony.

By the way

This incident did a lot to our three's standing in our group. From then on, we were treated with more respect. After all we had had the courage to stand our ground, while so many others had chickened out. Nor did we break up when facing our executioners, or beg them to spare our lives. Maybe others would have.

We returned to our barracks. The next day we were told we would be sent to a concentration camp. We lost our prisoner of war status. From then on we awaited transport to take us there. These were the dying days of the war. The transport never came, roads and railways were damaged, and Germany was defeated. Eventually the Ukrainian SS left and were replaced by our former Volksturm guards. We were no longer working, the food was bad, and there was a lack of supplies. Luckily we had some Red Cross parcels, which kept us going.

April 29 1945 we were free to do what we liked within the camp. The next day we heard of German capitulation. Our group laid a wreath to commemorate our freedom. We said good-bye to our guards and received a parcel of supplies. This was the 207th day of slavery. There was no hostility between our guards and us. The war was over. We all had had to do whatever our duty was. It was funny, we did not feel any hostility to them, they were just people, not like the SS who were brutes.

In my book "God's Leading in My Life" on page 44 I describe this event as
"God's move in my life No. 6 " – End of the War

1945 05 01 we were led by our former Volksturm guards to the Swiss border and handed over to the Swiss. Our guards surrendered to the Swiss too. This way they would not be captured by the Allies and have to face prisoner of war camps. The Swiss soldiers looked at us with suspicion, but they greeted the German soldiers with open arms. They spoke the same language, had more in common with them. It felt disappointing. We were the victims, they were the oppressors, and the Swiss were neutral. I guess what you stand for, does not amount to much.

In May 1945 the World War II ended as I found myself in Switzerland. What followed is described in the following chapters.

The events unfolding back in Poland after the Warsaw Uprising and before January 1945 were as follows:

My aunt and grandmother remained in our own apartment Warsaw, Praga now under

control of the Russian Army.

My sister was hiding in Kraków, still occupied by the Nazis. She was not able to communicate with my aunt in Warsaw

I was a prisoner of war in Austria

Each of us did not know what had happened to the others.

By the way

The great divide – the front line, along the River Vistula, between the Russian / German Armies.

There was no direct way to communicate across this line. The Red Cross was the only way, but it was slow, taking months to find out if someone was alive.

In January 1945 the offensive begun and the Red Army advanced towards Berlin.

1945 February 18 My sister returned to Warsaw to reunite with our aunt and grandmother.

After the destruction of Warsaw there was no accommodation to be found anywhere in Warsaw, so my sister moved back to live with our aunt. That is something I would have hated to do. My aunt was not easy to live with and besides I would not have wanted her financial support, which would have been inevitable unless I stopped all schooling. My sister had no other choice. As for me, that is why I did not want to go back to Poland.

June 15 Grandmother dies

She died broken hearted, for months thinking that Irka and I died in the Warsaw Uprising. She had promised our mother, on her death bed, that she would look after us and she failed! By that time she knew my sister was okay. If she could only have known that I was alive and well!

After all, from across the River Vistula, they observed the daily bombardment of Warsaw. They observed the billowing smoke of fires. They thought, how could anyone survive this outpouring of vengeance?

June 30 I received letter from the Red Cross that Irka wrote from Kraków.

I reply to the address in Kraków. Months later we re-establish contact with each other. From that time on, I stayed in touch with my family in Poland, up to the present day.

1946 February 18, on the anniversary of my sister's return to Warsaw a year earlier, they received news that I was alive and well. They believed I was in Switzerland, but by then I was already in Italy. From that time on we corresponded by letters.

Meantime in Poland a new reality took place – Soviet occupation.

At this time I had no contact with my sister, aunt and grandmother. In fact I thought they had all perished. I was in a state of shock and I was not thinking straight. While in Wolfsburg I wrote a letter home that never arrived there. Beyond this letter I don't think I made much effort to try to contact them. I could have doubted the survival of my sister, but there was a high probability that grandmother and aunt were unharmed. After all, there was no fighting in Praga where they were. My grandmother and aunt from August 1944, lived under Communism. It was only later, in Switzerland, that my sister found me and we all re-established contact with each other.

From then on we would all live apart. We exchanged letters. I was not able to help them financially, as I was penniless, just living from day to day. On the other hand, through correspondence, we could not learn much from each other either. Our letters were censored (read by Communist authorities looking for information). My sister was hiding her participation in the Warsaw Uprising and I too did not want to endanger them because of my participation. (AK was considered a hostile, Western controlled organization). So we never could share what mattered to us most.

Historical Background - Soviet Army “Liberate” Poland – article from Internet

Standard history texts and articles continually refer to the "liberation" of Poland by the Soviet Red Army towards the end of World War Two. There was no true liberation but merely the replacement of one brutal regime by another. The Soviets literally occupied post-war Poland, with the aid of Polish troops and Communist puppets installed by and loyal to Stalin, until the late 1980s.

In 1944 the Soviets entered the region of Poland that the Soviets attacked and held in 1939. Poles there knew from personal experience what the Soviets were like. They had already experienced arrests, deportation, and persecution in the years 1939 - 1941.

The attitude of the Polish population towards Soviet entry was generally hostile, while some cases existed of welcoming them, they soon turned into hatred as Red Army soldiers engaged in plunder, rape, banditry, while NKVD implemented a reign of political terror. In the eyes of the rest of Polish society, which wasn't yet under the Soviet occupation in 1939-1941, the Soviets became new occupiers, and soon protests and demands of their withdrawal have spread among the country. A popular belief was that Western Allies would soon defeat Soviets using atomic weapons and free Poland from the Soviets.

Political reality

The Red Army imposed the Communist government on Poland. Poland was under Soviet control, both directly (Red Army, NKVD, Soviet concentration camps in Poland, deportations to the Soviet Union) and indirectly (NKVD created the Polish political police UB). The numbers of Red Army forces stationed in Poland (1945: 500,000 / until 1955: 120,000-150,000 / until 1989: 40,000) In 1945, Soviet generals and advisors formed 80 percent of the officer cadre of the Polish Army. (We must not forget that NKWD murdered thousands of Polish officers in Katyn) Supported by the Red Army, the Polish United Workers' Party became the dominant political party, officially making Poland a socialist state.

Stalinist era 1944 - 1956 (12 years)

While formal Polish sovereignty was almost immediately restored when the forces of Nazi Germany were expelled in 1945, in reality the country remained under firm Soviet control as it remained occupied by the Soviet Army Northern Group of Forces until 1956.

Polish Stalinists took control of the country immediately after the liberation from Nazi Germany in 1944, the official name of the state was changed only eight years later (in 1952). The People's Republic of Poland (PRL) was the official name of Poland from 1952 to 1990. Although the Polish People's Republic was a sovereign state as defined by international law, the Kremlin at the very least approved its leaders. They aligned their policies with those of Moscow, making the People's Republic of Poland a satellite state member of the Eastern Bloc almost entirely subordinate to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had much influence over internal affairs and foreign affairs.

By June 1956 voices began to be raised in the Party and among the intellectuals calling for wider reforms of the Stalinist system. Soviet troops (the Northern Group of Forces) were stationed in Poland from 1945 until 1993. It was only in 1956 that official agreements between the Communist regime in

Poland, established by Soviets themselves, and Soviet Union recognized the presence of those troops; hence many Polish scholars accept the usage of term 'occupation' for the period 1945-1956. Other scholars date the Soviet occupation till 1989. The Polish Government in Exile existed until 1990. Eventually, power shifted towards moderates. Hardline Stalinists were removed from power and many Soviet officers serving in the Polish Army were dismissed. This marked the end of the Stalinist era

The Red Army was to ensure the loyalty of the Polish Communist government, and its Polish People's Army. Soviet forces were mobilized and actually advanced on Warsaw during October 1956, and there were threats that they could be similarly used before the martial law in Poland was introduced to stem the progress of the Solidarity movement in 1980.

A quote from Neal Ascherson's book, The Polish August, summarizes this fact: "The Stalinist epoch in Poland was at once sinister and grotesque, a period in which the party ruled through open police terror. Poland was opened to almost uncontrolled Soviet economic exploitation, through one-sided terms of trade, while the bureaucracy was in some areas thoroughly penetrated by Soviet advisers. All this was accompanied by deafening propaganda devoted to imaginary successes and to equally imaginary espionage or subversion plots against the regime."

Economical reality

Poland suffered tremendous economic losses during World War II. In 1939, Poland had 35.1 million inhabitants, but the census of 14 February 1946 showed only 23.9 million inhabitants. (The difference was partially the result of the border revision.) The losses in national resources and infrastructure amounted to 38 percent. Compared to Western European nations, including Germany, Poland was still mostly an agricultural country.

Units of the Red Army were to organize and transport war reparation resources from the former eastern territories of Germany attached to Poland after World War II (the so-called Recovered Territories) to the Soviet Union. Those actions, often involved complete stripping down of industrial facilities, sometimes also took place in the traditional Polish territories. This caused tensions between the Soviets and the Polish government, which intended to use the resources of those territories to rebuild Poland.

The immense tasks of reconstruction of the country were hampered by the internal struggles within the political system and by mistrust of majority of Poles of the communist government. As control of the Polish territories passed from occupying forces of Nazi Germany to the Red Army, and from the Red Army to Polish Communists, Poland's new economic system began moving towards a Communist centrally planned economy.

On 6 September 1944 - agricultural reform

All estates over half a square kilometre in pre-war Polish territories and all over one square kilometre in former German territories were nationalized without compensation. In total, 31,000 square kilometres of land were nationalized in Poland and five million in the former German territories, out of which 12,000 square kilometres were redistributed to peasants and the rest remained in the hands of the government.

In 1946 - nationalization began

All enterprises with over 50 employees were nationalized, with no compensation to Polish owners.

Because Poland was in the Soviet sphere of influence, the Western powers were unwilling to finance Polish recovery. As the Cold War set in, Poland was prevented by the Soviet Union, from applying for assistance under the Marshall Aid program and was unable to insist on restitution of property from Western Germany. Polish survivors of concentration camps and compulsory labor were denied compensation on grounds that money thus paid would support Communism. During the 1950s the Western powers washed their hands of the Polish issue, instead concentrating on West German

reconstruction.

The war damage compensation from Germany was intended to include large-scale reparations payments to Poland. However, those were truncated into insignificance by the break-up of Germany into east and west. Poland was then to receive her share from the East Germany. The Soviets pressured the Polish Government to cease receiving the reparations payments far ahead of schedule, as a sign of 'friendship' between the two new communist neighbors and, therefore, now friends. Thus, without the fully deserved reparation payments and without the massive Marshall Plan offered to the West Germany, Poland's postwar recovery was much harder than it could have been.

The scandalous behaviour of Red Army soldiers

In Poland Nazi atrocities ended by late 1944, but they were replaced by Soviet oppression with the advance of Red Army forces. Soviet soldiers often engaged in plunder, rape, and other crimes against the Poles, causing the population to fear and hate the regime. Soviet soldiers raped Poles, Czechs and Yugoslavs and even Russian women. Rape was often accompanied by torture and mutilation and frequently ended in the victim being shot or bludgeoned to death.

The documents of the era show also that the problem of sexual violence against Polish women by Soviet servicemen was serious both during and after the advance of Soviet forces across Poland. Joanna Ostrowska and Marcin Zaremba of the Polish Academy of Sciences estimate that rapes of Polish women reached a mass scale following the Winter Offensive of 1945. Whether the number of victims could have reached or even exceeded 100,000 is only a matter of guessing

In Kraków, mass rapes of Polish women and girls, as well as the plunder of private property by Red Army soldiers accompanied the Soviet entry into the city

Following the Red Army's capture of Berlin in 1945, a mass rape considered the most extensive in modern history took place. Soviet troops raped German women and girls as young as eight years old. Estimates of the total number of victims range from tens of thousands to two million. Female deaths in connection with the rapes in Germany, overall, are estimated at 240,000

Soviet soldiers perceived themselves to be conquerors rather than liberators in hostile regions. They viewed violence against civilians as a privilege of victors.



By the way

American forces, which soon withdrew, first liberated my wife, in Eisenberg, Germany, in 1945, and then the Russians took over. Her observation was, that so many officers in the Soviet Red Army were Jews. At the time the head of NKWD was a Jew, and many political officers were Jews. It is interesting to note that under the Nazis, Jews were persecuted, but under Stalin they prospered. In 1939 when the Russian Army advanced to the east part of Poland, Jews fully collaborated with NKWD. Fortunes must have changed after Stalin, as there was a great exodus of Jews from the Soviet Union to Israel.

Spiritual lesson

Soviet soldiers were known during WWII for exceptional brutality, rape, looting, and disrespect for life. Their victims were their own population, their allies, but especially their enemies. Other nationalities were not exempted from similar incidents, but what distinguishes the Soviets is that these acts were rarely punished or prevented by their command.

It is to be noticed that under Communism there was no religion, no moral training, and purely secular education. That is what atheism does! As we observe falling away from God in our own society, no wonder we see more and more acts of brutality. People need training in moral values, but above all - people need God!

Mass deportation and resettlement of populations

Relocation of Poles

Between 1944 and 1946 there was a massive deportation and resettlement of Poles from Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania to Poland. The deportations continued until August 1, 1946.

Ukraine About 750,000 Poles and Jews from the western regions of Ukraine were deported

Belarus: It is estimated that about 150,000 to 250,000 people were deported from Belarus. Similar numbers were registered as Poles, but forced by the Belorussian officials to remain.

Lithuania In the end, only about 50 percent of the registered 400,000 people were allowed to leave. Dovile Budryte estimates that about 150,000 people left for Poland from Lithuania

Flight and expulsion of Germans (1944 - 1950)

These areas of expulsion from pre-war German provinces, which were transferred to Poland and the Soviet Union after the war, as well as areas which Nazi Germany had annexed or occupied in pre-war Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, northern Yugoslavia and other states Central and Eastern Europe. The movement of Germans involved a total of at least 12 million people, with some sources putting the figure at 14 million, and was the largest movement or transfer of any population in modern European history.

Land reforms

Polish and Jewish citizens may at first have preferred a Soviet regime to a German one, but the Soviets soon proved as hostile and destructive towards the Polish citizens and their existence as the Nazis. They began confiscating and redistributing all private and state-owned Polish property. Red Army troops requisitioned food and other goods.

The Soviet base of support was strengthened temporarily by a land reform program initiated by the NKVD in which most of the owners of large lots of land were labeled "kulaks" and dispossessed of their land, which was then divided among poorer peasants. However, the Soviet authorities then started a campaign of forced collectivization, which largely nullified the earlier gains from the land reform as the peasants generally did not want to join the Kolkhoz farms, nor to give away their crops for free to fulfill the state-imposed quotas, which undercut nearly everyone's material needs (this in fact would make them agricultural workers employed by the state, and eventually they would become slaves of the state like in Russia)

The fate of members of AK

(Polish resistance movement under the command of the exile Polish Government in London)

By the summer of 1944 Polish underground forces numbered more than 300,000 (they were viewed by the Soviets as hostile.)

Some 25,000 Polish underground fighters including 300 top Home Army officers were captured by NKVD units and SMERSH operational groups in the fall of 1944, which was followed by their mass deportations

to the gulags. Between 1944 and 1946, thousands of Polish independence fighters actively opposed the new communist regime, attacking country offices of NKVD, SMERSH and the Polish communist secret service (UB). The events of the late 1940s amounted to a full-scale civil war according to some historians, especially in the eastern and central parts of the country. According to deposition by Józef Światło and other communist sources, the number of members of the Polish underground, rounded up on the order of Lavrentiy Beria and deported to Siberia and various camps in the Soviet Union, has reached 50,000 in 1945 alone. Their political leaders were kidnapped by the Soviet Union, tortured and sent to prison after a staged Trial of the Sixteen in Moscow. None survived. About 600 people perished. The rest managed to keep their AK involvement secret.

Social and Political changes

While Germans enforced their policies based on racism, the Soviet administration used slogans about class struggle, and dictatorship of the proletariat, which in Soviet reality were equal to Stalinism and Sovietization. Immediately after their conquest of eastern Poland, the Soviet authorities started a campaign of Sovietization - in effect an attempt to change democratic to totalitarian rule.

All the media became controlled by Moscow. Soviet occupation implemented a political regime similar to police state based on terror.

All Polish parties and organizations were disbanded. Only the Communist Party was allowed to exist with organizations subordinated to it. Soviet teachers in schools encouraged children to spy on their parents proposing money as bribes.

All organized religions were persecuted. Most churches were closed; priests and ministers were discriminated against by authorities, regardless of their faith, with forms of discrimination including high taxes, forced drafts into military service, arrests and deportations. Children were told that they should pray to paintings of Stalin instead of the cross, and were rewarded with sweets and candy for this.

The fate of Polish intelligentsia

Similar policies were applied to the civilian population as well. The Soviet authorities regarded service for the pre-war Polish state as a "crime against revolution" and "counter-revolutionary activity," and subsequently started arresting large numbers of Polish intelligentsia, politicians, civil servants and scientists, but also ordinary people suspected of posing a threat to the Soviet rule. Schoolchildren as young as 10 or 12 years old that laughed at Soviet propaganda presented in schools were sent into prisons, sometimes for as long as 10 years.

To this day the events of those and the following years are one of the stumbling blocks in Polish-Russian foreign relations. Polish requests for the return of property looted during the war or any demand for an apology for Soviet-era crimes are either ignored or prompt a brusque restatement of history as seen by the Kremlin, along the lines of "we freed you from Nazism: be grateful."

I have listed these extracts from the Internet to illustrate the conditions Poland was under after the war, which I know from my own reading and discussions with reliable witnesses. References: From Internet article "1944 –1945 brutality of Russians in Poland"

“Liberation of Poland by Soviet Forces in 1944-45”

My own comments and observations

From my letters I exchanged with my sister and aunt starting in 1945, and discussions with my brother-in-law in 1995, the most striking change they all expressed can be summarised as follows:

Rise of the working class to governing and power, and downgrading the middle class to sub-servant role. Outright hostility to upper classes.

General shortage of Polish intelligentsia

Both the Nazis and the Soviets killed thousands of Polish intelligentsia. Thousands escaped Poland and settled abroad. Because of general hostility of Poles towards the Soviets, those who remained were treated with suspicion and placed in minor positions of influence

Working conditions for the white-collar workers were oppressive. Top positions were filled by party members, often poorly suited for the job, often unqualified and lacking interpersonal skills. There was favoritism, rudeness, and bullying in the work place.

(My sister who remained in Poland shared her stories with me in her letters)

The professional, educated and white-collar workers were underpaid in comparison to the unskilled and blue-collar workers. Doctors, professors, professionals earned as much as factory workers. Money lost its power to motivate to greater efficiency. People worked only as much as they could get away with.

Deliberate mixing of classes

There was a deliberate policy to eliminate any class differences either based on education or culture. The slums and the rich neighborhoods were mixed. As a consequence there was no escape from vulgarity, drunkenness and swearing

Threat of spies and informers, as a consequence, watching always what one says or reveals about oneself.

Living under political system one disagrees with and with policies contrary to the good of Poland.

Drastic lowering of standard of living and no hope to improve it - a feeling of hopelessness.

Shortages of accommodation and goods.

No incentives to try harder or work smarter.

Young women outnumber young men two-to-one

Many Polish men were killed or those who found themselves in the West, did not go back and instead, like myself, settled abroad

Many people were hurting, having deep psychological problems and broken lives.

To get a glimpse at these conditions through my sister's eyes - here is an excerpt from my sister's diary:

My sister's diary

Before even getting news from Andrzej, just before the death of grandmother I started to work in a certain democratic institution before realising what it was. From 1945 June 05 to 1946 November 01 this work is to me equal in memories to the time of the uprising. Working conditions were horrible. At first I worked 11 hours per day for 1800 zloty a month. I had to hide my thoughts and my views on the current situation in Poland. To change work was extremely difficult. I could not study in the evenings because of the long hours at work. This way I wasted three years (since matriculation in 1943) unable to study. As soon as I could, I stopped working and started studies at

the University of Warsaw studying law. I was able to support myself as Uncle Boleslaw was sending me monthly cheques, which were due to me after my father's share in the company. Law does not suit me too much and I am thinking for the second year to switch to something else such as pharmaceutical studies. For the time being with the approach of examinations I must get ready as I want to pass them. In any event I will finish first year of Law.

By the Way

I thank God for sparing me from living under this Communist system. I cannot imagine how I could possibly have coped with these conditions, without getting into a lot of trouble.

War statistics

In my first book "God's Leading in My Life" on page 47 I quoted statistics published by the Communist Polish government in 1947 about WWII losses of the Polish population. I have problems with these statistics.

- There are no figures for the number of Poles who emigrated to the West (I suspect close to half a million)
- How many AK members lost their lives in German prisoner of war camps?
I know of two, who tried to escape from my camp in Tschubac, and who I suspect died there. There are almost certainly others.
- How many Poles were deported to Siberia?
My distant relative Boleslaw Sobieski was and many other AK members were as well.

I suspect some of these omissions were politically motivated.

The state of mind my sister and I were in

Earlier I described the state of confusion I was in after the fall of the Warsaw Uprising. Anguish about the wellbeing of my grandmother, aunt and sister (I assumed wrongly that they were all dead). I hardly made any effort to look for them. I was torn with feelings of guilt, hate, loneliness and insecurity. I did not know any foreign language (my German was very poor), I had no profession or trade. I had no clue what would happen to me after the end of World War II.

On the other hand, to know what my sister felt like - here is a letter my sister wrote to me (which I never received). It was written 1944 10 22 just three weeks after the Warsaw Uprising where thousands were killed or wounded and we each lost touch with each other.

Dear Andrzej,

What is happening to you? I long and worry so much for you. Are you healthy? Did you come out in one piece out of this hell of Warsaw? If you only knew how bad and empty it is without you. 'Til now I never realised how much I loved you. We needed a tragedy like this to realise how we are bound to each other. Andrzej, are you still alive? Look, I am so very lonely. I have no one by my side who needs or loves me. Do you think of me? Life is so hard without all of you, as I have no news of aunt and grandmother either. I feel so

alone. Where are you Andrzej? Answer me, I will lose my mind if I don't have the news soon.

Yes, we were separated for good. I never met my sister or grandmother again. Fifty-one years later, I met my aunt and spent about a week visiting her. What a joy! At 92 she no longer complained about what I did and did not do, but was welcoming and loving. We had so much to talk about: our lives, our family, our heritage.

Never again would I meet any of my childhood friends or classmates. I call it a “Brick wall” like a “Berlin wall” that split my life in two. And yet, in all of this, God works for good.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose

Adding to the WWII statistics

Polish fighter pilots shot down German planes

In defense of: Poland	126
France	56
United Kingdom	201
Confirmed	383
Probable	177
Damaged	252
Total	812

A poem that I wrote as a prisoner of war

This was a time of loneliness in the midst of crowds of people. Every three weeks we found ourselves in a different group of people. We learned how to make friends in a hurry. Some of us wanted to have lasting memories of them. I wrote this poem as a reflection on how brief these encounters were.

Pamiętnik

Spotykasz wielu w życia swego biegu
Przepędzasz z nimi jego czas
Lecz chwile płyną i znów w szeregu
Wspomnień zostają – bo los rozdzieli nas
Przerzucasz kartki, widzisz podpisy
Wspominasz – o minionej chwili śnisz
Minęło, to tylko zarysy – całości
To wczoraj, ale inne dziś
Tutaj koledzy tobie kreślimy
Słów kilka w wierszach tych
Że gdy je spotkasz – to te ci rymy
Wspomną zdarzenia minionych dni
Wolfsburg 1944 12 6

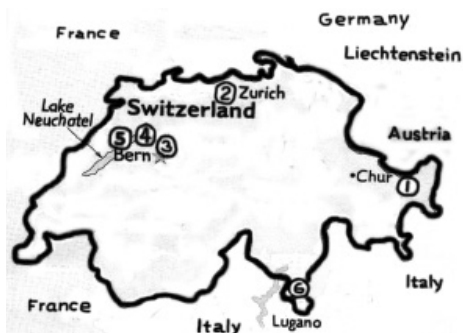
Memoir

We meet so many in the course of our lives
We spend with them part of life's time
Yet time flows and in its course
They become just a memory, as life separates us
You turn the pages, see their names
You remember – you recall past events
They passed away – now only a vague memory
It is yesterday, today is all different
Here, we your friends, write down
Few words in this rhyme
So when you come across them – this rhyme
Remind you of the events of forgotten days

CHAPTER 5 - Switzerland / Escape to Italy / Joining Polish Armed Forces after the war in Italy / England

Switzerland

1945 May 5th - 1945 Nov. 1st For six months I was interned in Switzerland with full recognition of our military status as part of the Polish Army.



Places I stayed in Switzerland

1. Shultz - one day (or was it rather Chur?)
2. Bremgarten (near Zurich) – four weeks in quarantine
3. Erlach - one week
4. Kercers - two months. We lived in a schoolhouse from where we worked on farms
5. Frascchels near Neuchatel - three weeks
? Luscherz - three weeks, I worked on a farm
? St.Bleis near Neuchatel – one week
? Cheyres - six weeks, I worked on road construction (“?” - locations unknown)
6. Lugano - the point of our escape to Italy

The World War II ended on May 1st 1945. On May 5 we were marched towards the Swiss border. There we all received instructions of what to do next. We had to walk to the nearest town 46 kilometres away along a mountain road, up and down and winding through the mountains. The name of the town was Schultz (or was it rather Chur?) Along the way there would be water and feeding stations. Otherwise we were on our own. No guards, no guides.

One among us was an experienced soldier and he assembled volunteers to march at his command the right way, but it was tough. I joined the group. We marched military style. Fifty minutes marching followed by 10 minutes rest. We arrived in Schultz late in the evening and slept in a local school readied for the occasion. We were the third group that made it. Next day we boarded a passenger train to take us to the next location.

Bremgarten, Switzerland (near Zurich) 1945 05 05 1945 06 01 four weks. Here we were put on two floors of a building, equipped with beds, etc. We were to spend four weeks in a quarantine, before being released to mix with the local population. On a floor above us were civilians of other nationalities. We were under guard, confined strictly to our quarters. We would go for walks, escorted by our Swiss guards fully armed. On one of such walk we visited a riverbank. There in another group, some were allowed to swim. Some, who were more adventurous attempted to swim in the swift current of that mountain river. Two people drowned. I believe they were Slovaks. The food was very good and our starved bodies would have a chance to recover. We were given medical check-ups, our identities were recorded and other formalities took place. Our leaders contacted the Polish embassy in Bern. They were relieved to hear from us, as rumours had

it that our group had been killed by the SS.

In Switzerland we got new uniforms. They were somewhat odd, not like any Polish uniforms we knew. Rumours had it that they were WW I uniforms that had been in Swiss storage.

The Swiss soldiers were tough. They kept their distance and would not talk. They expected their orders to be followed without question. An incident one day showed us that they meant business. The civilians a floor above ours staged a rebellion for some reason unknown to us. They dismantled and threw their beds through the windows down to the street. The Swiss opened fire, into the air, we thought. Suddenly a cry and the rebellion stopped. What happened? A Slovak was killed. An unarmed civilian! We learned later, that the Swiss soldier who killed him got a prison sentence.

By the way

In Switzerland, during the war, all men between the ages of 18 and 65 were mobilized, trained and returned home with their weapons and uniforms. Should Germans attack the Swiss, every house would be defended. All roads leading to the border had concrete barricades ready to be pushed into position to stop enemy advance. In the mountain caves and tunnels there were gun positions - Switzerland would have been tough to conquer!

Switzerland's population consisted of four ethnic groups: German, French, Italian and a Roman mountain tribe. As an added precaution, the Swiss, along the German border employed troops composed of the Roman mountain tribal soldiers. This was to guard against the danger of Nazi sympathisers among Swiss ethnic German troops.

Erlach

1945 06 01 1945 06 07 one week

Here I managed to twist my leg. I swam in a lake and found out I still remember how to swim. I had not had an opportunity to test my swimming skills since I had learned them a week before the Warsaw Uprising. From here we put our luggage on a truck and marched four kilometres to our next destination.

Kercers

1945 06 07 1945 08 06 two months

Here we had a chance to make some money. Every morning a truck would arrive to take us to a farm to weed vegetable patches. We worked in the full heat of the day, stooping down or on our knees. After the day's work we would return to our quarters in a local school.

The Swiss farmers would come to the school and practice on gymnastic apparatus some of which were placed along the local streets. I was impressed. I had never seen this calibre of workout. These were tough men! All work and no fun. They were not friendly toward us either. This was because some of our men were dating local girls. Unlike the men, the girls seemed to have more time and no one to flirt with. This did not go well with the local male population.

On 30th of June 1945 I got a letter from the Red Cross informing me that my sister Irka

was alive and searching for me. Her address was in Kraków. I wrote to her immediately. Up to that point I had assumed that she died in the Uprising. This might have been a defence mechanism, so as not to think of what other horrible thing could have happened to her. Later I found out that on June 15th 1945 my grandmother died, heart broken over the loss of the two of us. We had all assumed the worst. Poor “Babcia” that is what we called her, she lost her husband (Dziadziuś), daughter (my mother) and for a time, she thought that she had lost us too. If she could only have known that we were alive!

By the way

Living in Praga (a part of Warsaw on the east side of River Vistula) during the Warsaw Uprising, my aunt and grandmother could, hear and see what was going in the Centrum of Warsaw. They could hear the explosions, artillery bombardment and air raids. They could see heavy smoke and airplanes bombing the town. They knew that both my sister and I were there. One can imagine what they must have thought, that we would be mutilated or killed.

It was particularly hard on my grandmother; she had promised our mother she would take care of us. She failed to keep this promise. I could not write home as I was inside the Nazi territory and she under the “liberated” Soviet territory, the two of us separated by a front line. The same was the situation with my sister. She could not write either. It was not until the end of the war, May 1945, that one could write letters. The Red Cross was the only way to exchange information, but it took months to get letters through, if at all. All they could really do was to pray for us. I wonder if they did. As it turned out, both my sister and I survived, and without a scratch!

By July 23rd I had made enough money that I bought a Swiss Tissot watch. Why Tissot? This was the same make as the watch I got in the Warsaw Uprising, which I had traded in in POW camp. In a way it saved my life. The new watch would last me 50 years! This was my first purchase ever with my own money.

Other notable events:

I had a toothache and had a tooth pulled out.

A big storm dumped hail, three centimetres in diameter.

Here, too, we were visited for the first time, by a representative of the Communist government in Poland.

Our allegiance was to the Polish Government in exile in London, England. For this reason we were regarded as hostile opposition to Communism in Poland. The interest of the Communists in us could only spell trouble. Many AK, including my distant relative Boleslaw Sobieski (who spend 10m years in Siberia) - returned to Poland after the war ended in Siberia.

The Swiss government was one of the first to recognise the Polish Communist Government that Russians installed there. The Swiss, eager to get rid of the refugees that flooded Switzerland after the war, were ready to ship us out to wherever. The Communists wanted us back too, as there was a shortage of Polish men in Poland after the war. But the last place I wanted to go to, was Poland. I found myself trapped. It would have been much better if I had been liberated by the Allies. From then on I was troubled about what to do.

Fräschels near Neuschatel

1945 08 06 1945 08 20 three weeks

This was a camp close to Neuschatel Lake in a French speaking part of Switzerland. It was a bigger camp where we rejoined other AK's. Here we saw a Polish film, had regular campfires with singing, and religious mass every Sunday. It was a camp where we connected with our friends and shared our experiences. We could only speculate as to our future. There was a feeling of uncertainty. In the end I asked for a work assignment to make some money.



A photo of AK group by Sunday mass altar



Right

The new uniforms we received



Left: "God, Honour, Homeland AK Warsaw" inscription on the altar background

Lfscherz

1945 08 20 1945 09 10 three weeks

I was sent to work for a farmer in a German speaking part of Switzerland.

By the way

The first thing the farmer asked me was, "Do you know how to mow wheat with a sickle? and "Do you know how to milk a cow?" I did not know how to do either. Apparently he had asked for someone with those skills. Someone messed it up. He kept me anyway.

The work was very hard and after three weeks I had to give up. The farmer was very friendly and his daughter, unmarried but with a child, an excellent cook. It was a very friendly place. The food was excellent. The farmer would wake me up at 5:30 a.m. My job was to clean the stable, which held a couple of horses and four cows. I had to feed the animals, groom them and then have breakfast with the family. Next I would go with the farmer into the fields and work alongside him. I knew some German, enough to have a simple conversation with the man. I liked him. He was a kind and friendly man. The work often involved loading heavy sacks of potatoes or other vegetables. At brakes we had a piece of bread with Swiss cheese, apple cider and plumb cake, absolutely delicious. We would work until 8:30 p.m. by which time I would be so tired, I went to bed, only to be awakened at 5:30 a.m. again. We worked like this six days a week. On Sunday, I got two hours free in the afternoon.

I remember one morning the farmer wake me up, knocking on the door. At the first knock I started a dream. It was all about my life, culminating with my dying. It was an incredibly long dream that stayed in my memory years after. It ended just as the farmer knocked the last knock. A lifetime dream in just few seconds! How incredibly fast is the working of our minds. I remember in my dream a deep sorrow and regret about messing things up. I must make sure that I do not end that way in my real life!

Being a city boy, I had to learn everything from scratch, especially how to handle the animals, of which I was scared at first. They were big and they had to get to know you. You had to wake them up first, because they would kick if you startled them without warning. Cows would try to pin you to the boards by leaning against you. But the heavy loads were much too much for me as I had never been very strong physically. In the end I caught a bad cold. I felt badly about giving my notice but it had to be done. It was here that I made another discovery. Physical work is not for me. From then on I knew I would have to study or else I would be in trouble. I never forgot that lesson.

St.Bleis near Neuschatel

1945 09 10 1945 09 18 one week

One week in our base camp before we transferred to another work camp.

By this time all the able men had been assigned to work camps. Everyone was working. There were no wounded or crippled AK men among us. Neither were there any AK women. If anyone was wounded, it might have been only a minor wound that healed quickly. All AK fighters with more seriously injuries were either executed by SS (in areas of Warsaw, overrun by SS) or survived and were left in Poland. To be truthful, I have no idea what might have happened to them. I assume after the capitulation of Warsaw they would have been taken to hospitals. I escaped that fate.

Cheyres

1945 09 18 1945 11 01 six weeks

I worked here on road construction. This was another work assignment. Originally I worked digging and whatever else the group did. One of my friends proposed to do sodding grass, which he claimed was an easier job. So the two of us volunteered to do so. I did not know anything about it, but he did. In a short time we would perfect our routine and started doing all the sodding there was. We were more independent and could manage our time better. The job proved to be more interesting and satisfying. Later, in Canada Irmi picked up on my experience and had me do a lot of sodding. From the money I earned at the farm, I bought a suitcase for 33 francs.

By the way

We found out later that the Swiss engineer on this job was a fake, an imposter. It was amazing in a small country like Switzerland, how was he expecting to get away with it. He got a prison sentence.

One evening in the camp, someone approached me saying there was a group crossing to Italy, and that we could go with them. I replied "You must be crazy, what would you go there for?" His answer was that there was a Polish Army we could join and there were schools. "Schools" was the magic word. I had to go back to school. The next night we would cross the Swiss border on our way to Italy. The man who would take our party across was a Polish soldier, smuggler who would take a load of Swiss watches with him as well

By the way

I was often included in all kinds of adventures. I was known to be a team player, easy to get along with. I always pulled my own weight and was not afraid to take a risk. I was welcomed in a group of similar-minded, forward thinking young men. We were mostly students, intelligent and patriotic.

Being physically weak from childhood, I had learned how to avoid conflict and use persuasion rather than force. So I was a peacemaker and an encourager, a welcomed member of a group. By the way, until this point my friends always referred to me by my underground nickname “Bak.” It was only later in Italy, that we all started using our real names.

Crossing the border was not an easy thing to do. It was heavily guarded with dogs and Swiss guards who did not hesitate to shoot to kill. Six months earlier, people were caught trying to cross and they each got prison sentence of one year. Until our attempt, no one had tried crossing again. Stakes were high, death or a one-year prison sentence if caught. But desperate times call for desperate actions; that is the story of my life.

That day I returned the suitcase that I had bought earlier, and got a refund of 25 francs. I would carry my belongings in a backpack. It was Friday, our payday, but our train to Lugano and to the boarder would leave earlier, so one of us was left behind to collect our pay and bring it in on the next train. With this money we paid the smuggler his fee. From the train station we walked across country roads and fields to the foothills of the mountains. Under the cover of darkness we followed our guide, in single file, climbing the rocks along the stream, walking in water. Soon some people started discarding their suitcases along the route. It was a gruelling climb as the mountain was high, the streambed steep and the vegetation dense. At one point we were ordered to be still. I looked down, I could see couple of border police and a dog, far below. We hardly breathed. After several hours we reached the peak. Daylight was breaking.

The smuggler pointed and said “Run for your life”. The guards would shoot to kill. I was at back of the group and did not hear what he said. It happened so fast. When I looked up the group had dispersed and I was on my own. I got only a momentary glimpse of one of the group disappearing between bushes and rocks, and I followed in the same direction, running, zig zagging, leaping behind rocks or trees so as to be a tough target to hit. I ran at top speed right down to the bottom, watchful not to twist my ankle, following the general direction we had been shown. I did not hear any shots fired at me, but than again, I was too busy to know it for sure. Soon I joined a few others who appeared from nowhere. We were told that a Polish Army truck would wait for us. It did. We assembled and counted heads. Two were missing; they had run back into the Swiss territory. As for us we did it!

1945 11 01 I crossed illegally from Switzerland to Italy with the purpose of joining the Polish Army in Italy, but more specifically to get back to school. I have never been back to Switzerland since. I wonder if I am still on their wanted list.

Italy

1945 Nov 1st - 1946 Oct 1st For 11 months I was in **Italy** where I joined the Polish Forces



Places I stayed in Italy

1. Milan - one day, first stop after arriving in Italy
2. Predapio - two weeks
3. Barletta - five months, a DP (Displayed Persons) camp

Army schools

4. Amandola - two months, Math & Physics College
5. Fermo - three months, Math & Electric College
6. Verona – point of departure to England

Polish Army occupied the eastern part of Italy along the Adriatic Sea. The western part of Italy was occupied by the British and U.S. forces.

Milano

1945 11 01 1945 11 02 one day

The truck brought us to Milano, to the centre of town, within view of a famous cathedral. I noticed a completely different atmosphere. Whereas until this point everywhere we had been, we were subordinate to others, at Milano the Poles were in charge.

By the way

This was a real culture shock. Since 1939 I had lived under conditions in which we were governed by people who used a foreign official language. Here everything was done in Polish. The Polish Army occupied the east side of Italy along the Adriatic sea. In each town there were Polish officials, signs were in Polish and you could always find Polish soldiers to guide your way.

The next time I had a similar culture shock occurred in 1995, when I visited Poland for the first time. I stood amazed as I heard my mother tongue expressed freely and universally in the land. In Canada I hardly ever hear Polish anymore.

In Milano we had to fill out forms and give all our personal information. A Polish corporal was filling out the form and asking all the questions. The conversation went like this. “Where were you born?”

“Poznań”

“Naturally you are a Volksdeuch”

“No, naturally I am from AK”

“How come?”

To this I answered sarcastically: “I was born in a train passing through Poznań”

There were many instances that military personnel from the 2nd Polish Corp lacked understanding of the conditions in the Nazi occupied Poland.

There were other misunderstandings. I remember a corporal calling AK “Fire setting destroyers of Warsaw” and suggesting that we should face court-martial for destroying the

capital city of Poland. It was hard to hear such nonsense.

There was friction between groups of Poles who had different war experiences. Besides AK, there were Polish civilians who had been taken to slave camps in Germany or to concentration camps. Others were conscripted to serve in the German Army (Silesians, Pomeranians and Volksdeutch). As for me, I was not comfortable with Poles who served in the German Army; I thought of them as traitors. Later in England I would not talk to Hanyś Kolek for about five years. But he would become my best friend afterwards.

Predapio

1945 11 02 1945 11 16 two weeks

Here we met other AK men from Germany. I learned of three schoolmates from Bielany school who died in the Uprising or before. We visited Mussolini's castle and his family grave.

We were sent by train to our next destination. We are travelled as free men. There were no more guards. It was cold however and the train was not heated. After awhile some men started breaking benches and lit a fire right on the floor of the wagon! Luckily the train did not catch fire. We were not only from AK. It was a mixed crowd with Ukrainians, Poles who served in the German Army, civilians, people from concentration camps and some from forced labour in Germany. We talked, relating our war experiences. The trip took 10 hours.

An explanation is in order at this point. The war was over, however the Poles wanted to fight against the Russians and liberate Poland. They were mobilising troops, readying themselves for an offensive. They took in anyone who spoke Polish, no matter what side they had fought on during the war, that is, they did so until the Allies discovered what was going on. Interestingly enough in World War I (1914 - 1918) Poland had fought the Russians until 1920 and won that war. The Poles hoped to repeat that victory again. I came six months too late. The Allies had no desire to fight Russia, and they put a stop to new recruiting. Those six months in Switzerland cost me a chance to join the Polish Army.



In my book "God's Leading in My Life" on page 54 I describe:
"God's move in my life No. 8 – A way out of the camp"

Barletta

1945 11 18 1946 04 24 five months

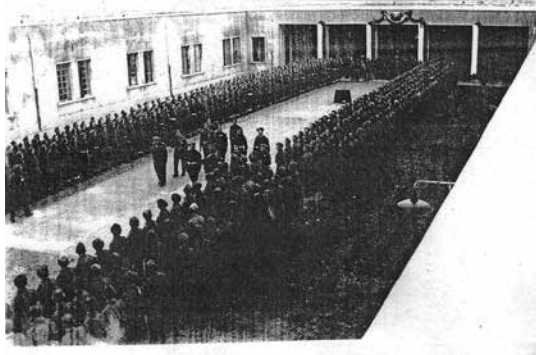
When we arrived in this camp we found it was a DP camp (Displaced Persons) basically a civilian camp with families, men, women and children. We lost the military status we had enjoyed in Austria and Switzerland. We were now civilians! But we would not take this indignity without a fight. All the AK men, got together, told the camp command of our plans and went on a hunger strike. We were joined by other young Polish men of different war experiences. After a couple of days we got a

response from the division headquarters, clearly puzzled about what was going on. They asked us “You are fed, provided for, what else do you want?” We explained our situation, we are soldiers, we do not belong here and we want to be doing something useful.

It took them a while to respond but finally we got our answer. We would be issued military uniforms and formed into three companies (which would include all the single men in the camp of military age.) Each company would be sponsored by a different Division of the Polish Army. Ours was 3 DSK (fir tree sign). We would be trained and perform police duties in the camp. We would not be armed, nor would we receive pay cheques, but only cigarettes rations. We accepted the deal. They really could not enlist us into the army.



I am in a middle row, third from the right



We moved into three separate barracks, one for each company. An officer from the supporting division was in charge of each company. From then on we had military training, marched out of camp and had police duties around the camp. At curfew our job was to get out all the male Polish soldiers out of the women's quarter's (there was Sodom and Gomorrah going on there!) Some were hiding in women's beds under blankets.



Under the circumstances, it was the best we could do. In our free time we would go to town

or walk along the Adriatic Sea coast. It was winter, cold and gloomy. I remember buying almonds, figs and dates to supplement my diet. The 50 cigarettes a week, sold on the black market, gave me enough spare cash to pay for what I needed. Food in the camp was good. I remember milk soup with noodles which tasted pretty good. Whatever happened to my dislike for milk?

I broke my watch at the camp. I had been bragging about my Swiss watch and the fact that it was shockproof. Someone suggested I drop it as a test. Stupid me, I did. It continued to work so I proved my point. That is, it worked for a while, but then it stopped. Falling on a concrete floor on its spindle broke something inside. One of the guys said he could fix it, and he did. It worked for the next 50 years. But after all that time, I took it to a watch repair shop, as it had started to lose time. He opened it and declared it had been fixed all those years earlier with glue! He could not replace the part as it was out of stock, so he closed the watch and it worked for few more years. So much for bragging. It seems, I never learned to stop bragging.

This amateur watchmaker who fixed my watch with a glue, was a crazy character. We got later to the same camp and I got to know him a little better. He bragged that back in Warsaw he strangled a German soldier. Why I asked. I just wanted to know how it feels, he answered. Later he got into a fist duel and I was his support man. You met some crazy people in the army and you had to watch your step.

I met a man in my company who gave me quite a surprise, his name was Maciek Morawski. He told me that we were distant cousins. I thought he was joking. (It never occurred to me that he might be the one my aunt had told me about, who was arrested somewhere around 1943). We talked, but did not become close. We were both very different. I was very focussed on goals and the future. He was very casual, careless and aimless. Soon after, he left the camp on his way to enlist in the American Army to fight against the Japanese. When his attempt to do so failed, he returned, but by that time I had left the camp. After a little while he left the camp again and managed, through a stroke of luck, to join the Polish Army police unit. (Maciek met a Polish officer who knew his father from WWI and he helped Maciek). We lost contact, but I later run into him briefly in England.

In Italy I discovered I was not very small anymore. I had grown, and under the most severe circumstances of hunger and cold. I was now average height. I put on some weight and did not look as childish as I had at the start of the Warsaw Uprising. I was glad, because at one time my mother had wondered if I would be a midget.

In my book "God's Leading in My Life" on page 55 I describe:
"God's move in my life No. 9 – I return to school"

1946 01 03 I was selected to form part of a delegation to see the 3 DSK general sponsoring our company.

I badly wanted to go. It was my chance to get into an army school. Our captain selected the delegation himself. There was a snag however; he chose one too many men. He called in the last two he had selected, and asked for one of us to volunteer to be left behind. We both declined, and the other man argued loudly that he should be the one to go. The captain looked at me asking for response. I told him I also wanted to go badly because it might be my only chance to get into military school. However since there was an impasse, I said I would stay. The captain's response to me was "You go." And to the other fellow he said "You stay." I thought it a wise way to resolve the problem.

We went by a truck to Atria and St. Benedetto to see the general. The general talked with each member of the delegation personally. When it came to me, he asked what I would like to see. My answer was that there were a few of us who would like the chance to join the military school. Although these schools were run by the military they were really high schools and technical schools (mechanical, electrical, etc.) designed to complete the education of soldiers who were out of the school system during the war. After a couple of days on the trip we returned to the camp.

We got a response to our delegation weeks later. First a bunch of us were selected to learn how to drive a truck. I had several lessons and drove a truck. But I never finished those lessons because I got admitted to school. My dream had come true!

Amandola

1946 04 24 1946 06 18 two months

This was a high school with an emphasis on mathematics and physics. It proved to be challenging. I joined in the middle of the curriculum year so I had a lot of catching up. During the war break I had forgotten a lot and some subjects like geography and history I never studied because during the war they were forbidden to teach. I studied as hard as I could and caught up quickly. Fortunately others had problems too. Some were much older than I was and they had a longer break from school. Overall I did okay.



I was still not receiving a military pay cheque, so I had to be much more careful with money than my colleagues, who were all in the army. My laundry was done by Italian women who waited every morning for us to drop off our dirty laundry. The first time I did it, I picked one elderly lady and from then on I would always give it to her. One morning, she was not there, so I gave it to another woman. The next day I had a scene on my hands.

“Why did you give it to another? Are you dissatisfied with my work?” she asked. These women had no other means of support and each client was very important to them. From then on I would never give my laundry to anyone else but her.

The Italian population was going through tough times. Lots of industry was destroyed during the war and there was no work to be had. Doing jobs for the military forces was very important to the civilians. An army of men was followed by an army of job seekers and of course, prostitutes. I would never get close to them, sexually transmitted diseases were rampant among soldiers.

As much as I was pleased to be in school, a general high school was not my preference, so I looked for other opportunities. I found one and asked for a transfer.

Fermo

1946 06 18 1946 09 29 three months

Technical High School (mechanical and electrical) housed in an Italian school of the same program. Here we had here practical work projects, laboratories, etc.



Working with iron in a lab. I am in the center



We were inland



about 10 kilometres from the Adriatic Sea to which we could easily get by truck or rail. The terrain was mountainous with winding roads leading down to the sea level.





To the left:

My photo taken at that time, in the year 1946, in Italy. I sent this photo to Poland to my sister and aunt. I was careful not to wear my army uniform, as it could have caused them some political troubles. I am wearing an army shirt, but it could have been any other shirt as well



Swimming in the Adriatic Sea. I am standing on the left side by a sailboat that was anchored there

It was mid-summer. After classes we went daily to the beach. I had no problems making friends.

In time I made many. Roman Krygiel was one of them. Some of my best memories are from here. The beaches were beautiful, the water was warm but very salty (after swimming you had to shower to wash off the salt, which would crystalize on your skin). Showers were on the roadside of the beach every few hundred meters. Along the shore there were banks of lower and higher ground you had to swim to.

Travelling along the Adriatic Sea coastline was done by hitchhiking on the coastal highway. The highway system in Italy, build by Mussolini, was excellent. Army trucks and jeeps travelled along this route and there was an unwritten code that they would pick up any soldier hitchhiking along the route. This part of Italy was occupied by the Polish Forces and most of the vehicles that stopped were Polish. Occasionally you could get a lift from English or Americans.

Hitchhiking for men was not a problem, but not so for women. Barbara Olczak shared with us that she once hitchhiked attempting to visit her fiancé. She got a lift in a jeep and sat on the back seat with another soldier. When he started making advances toward her, she started to cry. The polish officer who drove the jeep, came to her rescue; he told the soldier to leave her alone. But she got a big scare. I am not clear how she travelled on the way home.

Travelling in trucks, we would stand resting against the back closure gate under a canvas roof. In this position fumes often irritated your eyes during long trips. I remember many such trips. Military drivers did not observe speed limits. They often travelled at very high speeds and would be involved in spectacular crashes. Military police would patrol the highway and ensure security along the route. Within city limits, some areas were dangerous to go to because of a criminal element. The military presence was evidenced everywhere because of the number of troops left behind after the Italian campaign.

Departure from Italy

The Allies did not feel very secure with two Polish Armies (each about 100,000 men, one in Germany – the 1st Corp and one in Italy – the 2nd Corp). Each had an eye on the

Russians and was just itching to attack. So the decision was made to demobilize the two armies by bringing them to England and disbanding them to civilian life. We would not be returned to Poland, but as civilians, would be given freedom to go anywhere in the British Commonwealth.

Historical Background

Some explanation as to why Poland had such a large army fighting on the Allied side. In 1939 the whole Polish Air Force and Navy went to England. They were outnumbered by the Germans and faced total annihilation if they remained fighting in Poland. They would count for much more operating from English soil.

1st Corp. was formed out of soldiers and civilians who, after the 1939 campaign, managed to get to France. Many Polish refugees arrived in Romania and Hungary and went from there to France. Here they joined the Polish Army and fought in defence of France. Later some were evacuated to England. This force was under the command of general Mach

2nd Corp. was formed out of soldiers and civilians captured by the Russians when they attacked Poland in 1939. In the 40s Polish Government in England, through marshal Sikorski, negotiated with the Russians for the release of these people to the Middle East. There they were put under British command and took part in the African campaign against Rommel. They fought in Tobruk, Italian campaign and Monte Cassino. My uncle, Stanislaw Urbanowicz, father's brother from Poznań, was killed in the battle for Monte Casino and was buried there. My father never got out of Russia. It was only in 1999 that I learned that he was killed by the Russians in Katyń. 2nd Corp was under the command of general Anders.



Left
General Anders
Commander of the 2nd Corp



Right
The Polish cemetery at Monte Casino. My Uncle Stanislaw Urbanowicz who was killed in the battle for Monte Casino is buried there. I did not know this at the time, and I never visited the cemetery.

In Italy I did no sightseeing at all.

I estimated that after the war there were half a million Poles in England, of which only about 5000 were women.

1946 08 06 I joined Polish Forces in Italy Army No. 6 / U / 1927 / III
2nd. Polish Corps, 3DSK division part of British 8th Army under Marshal Aleksander.

The Polish command must have found a loophole so as to help the few of us caught in this unfortunate position and let us remain in the school. Aware of plans to depart from Italy, they did a little of black magic. Lucky for me. Does not God look after his own?

1946 08 31 I receive my first army pay cheque.
Until now all I got was 50 cigarettes a month, which I was selling on the black market.

I was sort of second class citizen until now. I even got my own rifle, even though I had never shot one (other then the single practice shot in Warsaw).

I was never able to help my family in Poland. I never had any money. What I had was hardly enough for my own needs. This story would continue for years to come, in England and Canada.



All packed up - waiting for a train in Fermo

September 29 1946 we left Fermo to Porto Civitanova and Werona destination Great Britain. Through Germany and France. From Calais through the English Channel by a rail carrying ship to Dover, England.

In all, I spent 11 months in Italy. Joining the Polish Army opened many doors for me, particularly a free university scholarship and a profession for the rest of my life. This is yet another example of getting in, in the nick of time. If I had not, my life would have follow an entirely different course - call it divine providence!

As my life began to unfold abroad, my sister, meanwhile, had to adjust to a new reality in Poland – the Communist regime. To tell her story, let me quote from her diary.

My sister's diary

Warsaw Uprising was like a bad dream full of tragic memories. Now when all of this is behind me, in retrospect I wonder how I survived the Uprising. When it ended I found myself in a camp and hospital in Pruszków, in Tworckach, next in Kraków and lastly I was deported to Dresno from where I escaped on the second day after arriving there. In that escape I had help from good people and God.

I returned to Warsaw in 1945 February 18. I found the apartment house still standing and grandmother and aunt in good health. Only Andrzej was missing, and that was a dark cloud over us and we all suffered through it. Soon after my return grandmother started heart problems. Doctors could not help her because of her age and she died 1945 June 15. Unfortunately, she did not share with us news from Andrzej. The news arrived here on the anniversary of my return home 1946 February 18. Andrzej wrote that he is in Switzerland, he is all right but he worries about us.

From that time on we exchange letters with him regularly. Right now he is in England studying in an Electrical College. He writes that life in England is boring and foggy like the climate. English girls are not too interesting and ill-mannered and Englishmen simple and full of conceit. We all know here that Poles do not feel well in England and are treated coldly by the English people.

As one can see there were many changes in my life over these last six years. I also changed. I do not know if these changes are for the better or worse. In any event changed are my views on the world and on life. When just now I read my old diary notes, I could not help but smile at my childish troubles and sorrows which were so devastating to me then. Today it looks to me so childish. The fight for survival, which today we are all engaged in, the fight for money for which people are capable of committing crimes, carve our characters for the whole of life. Is this fight for survival and money alone responsible for our character? Are not all disappointments, unfulfilled dreams teaching us not to dream too much because each disappointment brings pain? To children, the world always appears as a magic wonder and only their first direct contact forces them to question if it is so.

Enough to say that today when I think of attaining happiness in my life I have only 50 percent assurance that I will attain it. Happiness is like an elastic and its perception can in a short time extend beyond limits. Thus, after striving and attaining a goal, which was sure to provide happiness, we realise it did not. Therefore people who live for a present moment and do not attempt to make plans for the future are best off. Not everybody can live that way. There are people, and I belong to this category, to whom the everyday monotony is too oppressive to bear. Maybe I alone find everyday life so monotonous and uninteresting. I have friends who cannot be sad, they always find some entertainment, and at any moment can uncover life's hidden spark of joy.

I am alone. I have no home in a real sense and have no other human heart that is for me alone. That is not being sentimental; its truth. Every girl longs for her own place and to love and be loved. Instead I live with aunt and I don't always feel home, and love of my aunt is no substitute for the love of a man, that very one which each girl wants to meet in her life. If there is a large family that occupies all our thoughts and time, maybe one does not feel so lonely. I however have no family and I have too much time to be aware of the emptiness in my life. I encourage myself, as I am only 22 years old; as they say the whole life is ahead of me and soon something may change. I pray to God it will be soon.

This ends the quotation from my sister's diary



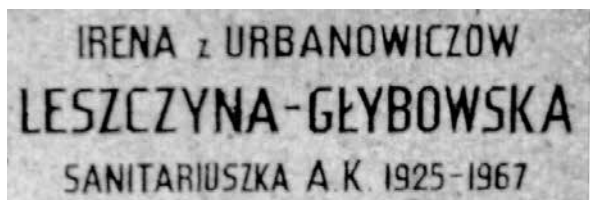
In 1949 Irka married Aleksander Leszczyna-Glybowski and God answered the prayer of a lonely girl. They had two sons.

She was a nurse during the Warsaw Uprising, and spent time in Pruszkow detention camp where she got malaria. From her teenage years she suffered from polyposis, which ultimately caused her death. She died with the knowledge that her older son inherited polyposis as she had (he died later at the age of 40) and that her younger son had a learning disability. This knowledge must have been devastating news for her. I can just imagine the anguish of her soul, feelings of guilt and sorrow.

She tasted the full flavours of life and eventually was overcome by sickness and death at the age of 42 in 1967. In all of this she lived, she loved, she cared, she suffered, she was a human being to the fullest.

I pray in memory of my loving sister. She knew Christ and can have confidence in His promise to all believers.

Matthew 11:28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest



Poems I wrote after the end of World War II

Po walce

Z zamętu mgła została
Lecz serc nam nie złała
Silniejsi i twardzi wiecej
Znów zaciskamy ręce
By w życie wejść czem prędzej
By znowu schwycić mocno
I Ciebie wskrzesić Polsko
My! Młodzi żołnierze
My! My – Twoje wojsko

After the fighting

Of confusion, fog is left
Yet did not break our hearts
Stronger and even tougher
Again we clench our fists
To return to normal life in a hurry
To get hold of our lives
To rebuild Poland
We! Young soldiers
We! We, Poland's Army

1945 Barletta, Italy

This was a time of great distress in my life. It was a month after the end of the war that I realized that going back to Poland was impossible. I was 18, I knew no foreign language, had an incomplete education, no work experience and was hardly able to stand on my own. I dealt with uncertainty, loneliness and much confusion. Fortunately, I had God to lean on. This poem expresses my complete dependence on God and a faith that was deeply rooted in my soul.

Modlitwa

Minął mój dawny, dziecka szczęsny czas
Matczyna minęła troska
A to co było. było tylko raz
Dziś inne – jutro – wola Boska
Pamiętam .. Matka .. czuję miłość jej
Uścisk, pieszczotę, staranie
Wczoraj odległe od dziś,
lecz w pamięci mej jak drogę
Mej matce otwórz niebo Panie
Życie nie jest piosenką, kolorowym snem
Szczęście przemija i boli
Przez życie idę i walczę ze złem
Jam sługa, Twej posłuszny woli
Dziś, kiedy jutro niepokoji mnie
Myślę żem w walce padł
Widzę mej Polski dalek losy złe
A siebie na obczyźnie jeszcze wiele lat
Ja Boże, wielbię Cię
W mej Polsce, Wisła toczy fale
Wiatr hula, ranne spędza mgły
Ja może Ojczyzny, nie zobaczę wcale
Lecz co by nie było, sprawisz Boże Ty
Tyś mi Panem, mym ojcem i władcą
Ty doświadczasz, nagradzasz, piętnujesz
Tyś nam w życiu przykładem, doradcą
Tyś jest Bogiem i Ty nam królujesz
Życie gorzkie, niweczy i psuje
I nie lekkie, a pełne zgryzoty
Ja dlatego w Tobie cel swój czuje
W Tobie zgaszę marzenia, tęsknoty

Prayer

Gone is my former, childhood happy time
Gone is my motherly care
What was before, it was only once
Today is different – tomorrow – God's will
I remember – mother – I still sense her love
Her hugging, cuddling, her care
Yesterday so distant from today
Yet, in my memory how precious
For my mother open Heaven Father
Life is not a song, a multi-coloured dream
Happiness passes and hurts
I go through life and fight against evil
I'm Your servant, obedient to Your will
Today, when the future worries me
I feel as I fell in the battle
I see Poland's future continually bad
And myself abroad for many, many years
I, my Father, delight in you
In my homeland, Vistula's waves flow by
Wind blows, disperses morning mist
I may never see my homeland again
But, whatever it is, God – it is Your will
You are our teacher, our Father and King
You test us, reward us, condemn us
You are our example, advisor
You are our God and you rule over us
Life is bitter. It destroys and spoils
And it is not easy, but full of obstacles
I therefore in You, life's purpose entrust
In You, I will rest my desires, and my dreams

1945 Bremengarten, Switzerland

When we arrived in Italy, it was already too late to join the Polish Forces. AK soldiers found ourselves in DP camps for the civilian population. At the same time in the Polish Forces there were many Poles (Volksdeutch) who deserted from the German Army. We from AK wrongly thought of them as traitors

Bunt!

Czemu marnuje swe młode lata?
 Czemu nie działałam, by zdobyć świat?
 Czemu tu siedzę? Czemu u kata?
 Czy w moim sercu już kopa lat?
 Dlaczego inni kształcą się, uczą
 Czemu dla innych taniec i śmiech
 W zbrojnym szeregu ci pieśni nuca
 A tym kół wiraż odbiera dech
 Czy tym pierwszeństwo co nasi zdrajcy?
 Czy Bierutowskim szpiclom jest cześć
 Że tu siedzimy, czyśmy wygnańcy
 Że nam powstańców los przyszło nieść
 Czy nasze blizny i nasze znoje
 Są gorsze, inne, poszły na marne
 Bo nam w przydziale nie były boje
 Pancerną armią zdobyć Italję
 Po coś krytyka i tłumaczenie
 Wszak to nie Polak jej wymaga
 Zgarnijcie zdrajców bo w poniżeniu
 Mocny wytrzyma, słaby odpada
 Lecz nie tu siła i nie tu władza
 Gdzie tłum bezmyślny i niepewny
 Nam czynu siła, pierś rozsądza
 Czyn nasz - Ojczyźnie wierny
 Misja Polaka dziś zagranicą
 Walka o wolność i swoje prawa
 Lecz dla Polaków, Polska strażnica
 Polak wywalczył jemu przypada
 Choć głód dolega, beczynność duszy
 Nikt nie odpowie pytaniu
 Ziwnijj ... walczyłeś dzielnie, to teraz musisz
 Zbierać owoce swej walki – w czekaniu

Rebellion!

Why do I waste my young years?
 Why don't I work, conquer the world?
 Why am I here? Why for God's sake
 Am I so old and useless now?
 Why others go to schools and study
 Why others dance and laugh
 Others march armed singing
 For some driving gives them thrills
 Are those better, who are our traitors?
 Are Communist spies to be praised?
 That here we sit - are we displaced?
 Because as AK soldiers – that is our place?
 Are our wounds and our difficulties
 Worse, different, are for no purpose
 For it was not our turn to fight battles
 Armed with tanks to conquer Italy?
 Why are we criticized and need to explain
 For it is not a Pole that questions us
 Keep recruiting traitors, but under oppression
 Strong one will survive, but weak will fall away
 For strength and wisdom is not where
 Crowd is unthinking and unsure
 For we are proud of what we stand for
 We are loyal to our homeland
 A mission for a Pole abroad
 Is to stand for our rights and freedom
 Poland is for the Poles and their protection
 We fought for our freedom, it belongs to us
 Though hunger lingers, idleness oppresses
 No one will answer our pleas
 Yawn ... you fought bravely, so today
 You gather the fruit of your fight – in waiting

1945 Barletta, Italy

I landed in England at Dover 1946 10 03 as part of the Polish Forces by a military train transport from Italy, via Germany, France through Calais to Dover. 2nd Polish Corps, 3 DSK Division, Army No. 6/U/1927/III, Private

Magholl, near Liverpool, 79 Transit Camp

1946 10 04 1946 12 16 two months

Coming to England from sunny Italy it was like gloom and doom. It was fall, the weather was foggy, damp and chilly. Our future was uncertain. My big concern was to learn English, although being in the Polish Army, I had little opportunity to use the language. From past experience I knew that I had little talent as far as languages go. For starters I bought a Polish - English dictionary and started memorizing words. I knew I must succeed, that my whole future depended on it!

By the way

I was in a precarious situation. I was abroad, determined not to return to Communist Poland, knew no foreign language, with incomplete education and no real work experience. I was never very handy, nor practical. I was more of a dreamer, poet, intellectual and deeply religious. I was fully aware of my own shortcomings. It scared me. I had to do my utmost to be able to succeed. Until now God looked after me. Others provided for me without any initiative of my own. At this time it looked like I had another opportunity to be provided for - for the next two years.

From that time on I pushed hard to make the best of the opportunities presented to me. It became a pattern for the rest of my life. I had to overcome my natural tendency of inaction, to work hard and accomplish results. Later on in my life my wife, unwittingly, added external motivation to keep me on this course. To this day, there is always another goal to accomplish, another summit to claim.

After all the Bible teaches

*2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: **"If a man will not I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.***

Our school restarted lectures after about two weeks break. Every weekend there was a dance in the camp and local English girls came to dance. I was introduced to an English girl who was interested in me. I dated her for about four weeks, mostly to have someone to practice English with. We had all kinds of difficulties in communication. Later I corresponded with her for a while and then our correspondence stopped. Thank heaven. She was definitely not right for me.

My last memory of Waldek ends here. We were together in Warsaw Uprising, in POW camps, in Switzerland, Italy, now in England. But our ways parted here. (I no longer remember when we separated, but up to this point our paths kept crossing). He was Polish through and through. His humour, his jokes could not translate to another language. He thrived on company and being the centre of attention. He needed Polish girls. He went back to Poland. I wonder what happened to him.

By the way

I did offend Waldek, and in the end he stayed away from me. It was entirely my fault. I guess I became too familiar with him. His fly was open and I told him so in a sarcastic voice, in front of others. It was disrespectful. Every human being needs respect. Those things should be said in private. It has always bothered me. He deserved better. Some things you cannot fix. It is one of the regrets in my life.

Soon the army schools were transported to another location, which became a technical training centre for Polish ex-servicemen. This would be my home for the next two years.

1946 Oct 1st - 1948 Oct 6th For two years I was part of Polish Resettlement Corp.

This camp was a wartime airstrip used by the Americans to bomb Germany. It was in an isolated area, 10 kilometrew from the nearest town (Millom), on the west coast of Britain, opposite the Isle of Man. The kilometre long airstrip ended at the sea shore (where the planes would have become airborne). The camp was at the other end, inland. The whole

area was sand dunes and wild vegetation. There was not a living soul anywhere near the camp.

For the next two years it would be my home, memorable for my daily, lonely, long walks down the runway to the sea and then along the sea shore. I was always fascinated by the sea. I had never been to the seaside in Poland. The first time I saw the sea was in sunny Italy, and it was the Adriatic Sea. The beaches in Millom were pebbles some two inches in size, others smaller or larger. Walking was slow as the stones shifted under your feet. Every day I went for walks mostly alone as no one else cared to go in all kinds of weather like I did. I loved the solitude, the pounding of the waves and the vast expanse of water. Even today I love water lakes and the sea.

By the way

Walking became a passion for all my life. I always walked. I loved the solitude and the beauty of nature around me. Walking relaxed my mind and refreshed my spirit. It gave me a chance to have my own thoughts and to process puzzling information. I love sharing my walk with my friends and family. It is, however, hard to find someone as committed to walking as I am, so most frequently I walk alone.

There was a time I enjoyed cycling. That too had a similar effect on me as walking. These were about the only physical activities I engaged in throughout my life. Why? Everything else costs money and requires training. Most of my life I had no money and no opportunity to train. I am not gifted with natural physical abilities. I was never good in team sports. I had health, willpower, the right attitude, but no money. I don't think I missed much. What I had was sufficient to keep me satisfied. Greed was never my problem. Neither was envy.

Years later a doctor told me I would have been a good long distance runner. Why? I had a very low blood pressure. Now you are telling me! That would have been useful information when I was young, not when I am over 70.



Centrum of Technical training
Millom, Cumberland



General view of the camp

This camp became home to approximately 2000 servicemen trained for jobs in their civilian careers. Soon our mission was changed from active military to semi civilian retraining focus.

We were here to

learn some trade to work in after discharge from the army. We entered into a two-year training program (PRC) and after completing it we would enter civilian life working in a trade of our choice. However there was a labour shortage in mining and textiles so we would be regularly enticed to drop our studies and work in these fields. These frequent appeals sounded more like pressure to me, which was a constant threat and a nuisance. 1947 01 28 discharged from 2nd Polish Corps.

Officially I was in the forces from 1946 08 06 to 1947 01 28 (only four-and-a-half months!) In reality three years from the time I joined AK in January 1944
1947 01 29 joined Polish Resettlement Corps (PRC). Rank Pte. No. 30 077 086
1947 06 08 my 20th birthday

1947 06 24 changed from Mechanical - Electrical to Building Construction College
This was my second move, first from a high school (Amandola) to technical high school (mechanical and electrical in Fermo). In camp I found out about the existence of a building construction college. Since I completed first year in Warsaw, this was my preferred choice. After all, I had studied these subjects for the past five years.

By the way

From Mechanical – Electrical College I know Heniek Olczak and Roman Krygiel
From Building Construction College I know Jurek Orzechowski, Olek Opalinski, Wojtek Olbrycht and Kazik Stankiewicz. All these were here in Canada, living in Toronto, where we often would see each other and spent time together.

The three of us Jurek, Olek and I completed Millom College together and went on studying at the university together. All three of us are still now here in Toronto. They both came here before us. Strangely enough we were once very close with each other, but no longer are. Our lives separated about the time we had our children Tina and Nicole. Their children were Roland's age, and so we had less in common. After the death of my wife, I tried to revive this relationship, but they would not respond. Nevertheless we remain in occasional contact.



Kazik Stankiewicz-Wisniewski was in the same class as I. He had a separate room in the barrack since his feet smelled so bad no one could be close with him, yet he washed them in Epsom salt twice a day. He spent five years in a concentration camp. Just before the end of war, he escaped from the concentration camp and lived four weeks in a haystack eating row turnips. When he surrendered himself to the Americans, they put him in hospital. There he got addicted to heroine, which had been part of his treatment. Since then, he swallows aspirins by handfuls. He was a

witness in the Nuremberg trial against the Nazi criminals. He was my sponsor when I came to Canada in 1957.

In this camp there was a mix. We all arrived here from Poland through different routes. Heniek (his wife Barbara), Roman and I we were from AK, Warsaw Uprising and POW camps

Jurek (his wife Marianna), Olek (his wife Teresa), Wojtek's wife Danusia and Roman's wife Czesia– their families were deported in 1939 by the Russians to Siberia from where they travelled to them Middle East, 2nd Corp and Africa, and as children, were in camp schools in Africa.

Wojtek was from AK, escaped to Sweden from where he came to Italy.
Others were from the German army, Concentration or slave labour camps.

There were some strange characters as well. The amateur watchmaker, who back in Italy

fixed my watch with glue was one of them. He liked me and I was able to get to know him a little better. Once he confided in me that once, back in Poland, under the German occupation he strangled a German soldier. I asked, why would you do it? "Oh I just wanted to know how it felt," he said, without any sign of remorse. He would easily get into heated arguments and on one occasion, he challenged another man to a fist fight. I was his second (he did not have many friends). We had to stop the fight - he was a dirty fighter.

This was a melting pot. We learned here how to live harmoniously with each other and overcome our prejudices. Mind you, at this time only Heniek Olczak was married and with a baby. Others met and married later on in London. In Millom camp, out of about 2000 soldiers, only a handful were married and lived in separate quarters. As there were no women in the camp, these married couples were often befriended by others, just so they could experience female presence. I was too proud to do so and kept away from Heniek. Only later in London would we become close friends. All these people I mentioned above were at one point or another close friends of my wife and me.

Living conditions in the camp

We lived here in concrete block barracks, heated by wood stoves, not unlike those in Austria in my prisoner of war days. We slept in individual bunk beds. When it was cold and fuel was in short supply, we would go into the airfield and dig out drainage ditches. We found they were backfilled with coke (processed coal from iron furnaces), which burned giving a lot of heat. I studied all I could, but every now and then would do push-ups on a trapeze we had there for exercising. I would do other exercises on the trapeze, on my own, attempting other tricks when no one looked. We would box and learn to dance as time allowed. At that time I still remembered how to speak in Warsaw slang so I was sometimes called to do a demonstration. Every night after supper I would go for my walk, down the runway to the sea shore and along the shore accompanied by the constant sound of crushing waves.

On Saturday afternoon we would take a bus to town and go to a movie. The movie house was often packed solid and all you could get was a six penny seat (first row just below the screen). One day a week there was a dance. A busload of English girls would come to the camp for such an occasion.

Among us was a German, who spoke Polish. His name was Weber. I boxed with him a lot. I was quick and we had fun. Probably it was not very wise, because if he had connected I would have been knocked out. As every Saturday there was a dance at camp, we also practised dancing. Since I did not know how to dance, but was eager to learn - I was the girl, others would lead. Later I had to unlearn the woman's part and learn the man's part.

One incident I will never forget. I was studying in the barrack not aware of anyone else being there. I hummed a tune of my own making. When I stopped a voice spoke "Don't

stop, it was beautiful”. It was another soldier resting on a top bunk. I was shocked, I had never had such positive feedback.

By the way

I grew up without music. Yes, mother played piano in my childhood, later I heard church music, but it was very, very rare. During the war – there was no music in my life. After the war, music was everywhere, but I soon discovered there was too much of it. Maybe because it was the kind of music I do not care for. Some music I enjoy, not any particular style, but there is an inner quality I look for. I do not intentionally listen to music ever. Yet in my mind there is often a tune that forms and grows. I wish I could record it, but I do not know how. Could I write and record my own music, if I knew how? I wonder. What kind of music would it be? It would be deep in meaning and emotion – it would touch your heart.

We had regular classes from morning until afternoon. We also had a lot of studying to do. From the very first time I started school in Italy I worked my heart out studying. I had to succeed! I had no idea what the future would bring, so I had to make the most of each day and every opportunity. I had to learn! I was a top student all along. Not necessarily the smartest, but the hardest working. I always thought Jurek Orzechowski was extremely intelligent. He proved it later in his professional life in Canada (he became chief engineer at “Fenco” Consulting firm in Toronto), but it came easy to him easy without studying. He played cards a lot and socialized with others. As for me, nothing came easy, I had to work hard.

To accelerate my progress in learning the English language I took private lessons in the town of Millom. I found a retired high school teacher who gave me one lesson per week. He worked with me on grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. I had to take a bus to town, both ways, and pay for the lessons. I don’t think anyone else did that.

By the way

My memory was never good. I had to make notes and summaries that I could later memorize just hours before exams. This took many hours to study and write down. In a day or two I no longer remembered it. The bottom line is that I developed techniques that worked for me and overcame my shortcomings. I also kept notes of dates and addresses of important events in my life. These came in useful in writing my two books. Later I neglected writing too many details as my wife had an excellent memory and she could easily recall dates and places. When she died I resumed recording every detail, but what she remembered is now gone.



Because of our technical curriculum we also had practical exercises in surveying. Mostly in summer we used surveying instruments outdoors. The program was very similar in content as what I had studied in Poland in Bielany, but at a much more advanced level. When later I studied civil engineering, I continued in the same stream. My profession

evolved unintentionally on my part, from the fact that in 1940 the priests had to change the general high school program to technical. Was God leading me this way?

One of my professors in Millom was Maksimowicz, an elderly man, an engineer in his sixties. He was a tall, strong man. He was married to a young wife, who had remained in London. He had a son, a little boy of about five or six years old, who stayed with him in the camp. I love children, so I played with his son a lot. I would carry him on my shoulders, take him for walks, etc. The boy liked me and whenever he could, he would look for me to play with him. The professor did not like me much. He was not too good at explaining things, and I would ask questions in class that he was not able to answer. However, because of his son he could not be too harsh with me. On the final exam though, the oral part of it, he tried very hard to fail me, or at least to lower my mark - to no avail. Other examiners had me marked for a top mark. I heard later that he falsified his age, went to U.S.A. and worked there into his nineties!

We had times away from studies. I remember a bus trip to a nearby lake district. We went as a group, some married couples as well. What I disliked in the army, was almost total absence of women. I missed them. After all as a child I had few men in my life, but mostly women. I missed their gentleness and thoughtfulness.



I remember one Christmas, we from the AK, staged a play "Warsaw Uprising." I had a small part in it. What I liked best though, was the teamwork, putting it all together. Again there were couple of ladies in that group.



The cast. I am standing on the right



In the background – a scene of Warsaw



Some played soccer, the only team sport I enjoyed watching.

On this photo I am fourth from the left, Jurek Orzechowski is sixth.

1947 12 23 Six days vacation to Bristol and Birmingham
I went together with a close friend from the camp Wiesiek

Wesołowski. He was a really good person, one I could talk to about God. During the war he was in a concentration camp. When he was liberated by the Allies, he joined the Polish Army and volunteered for the commando unit. Commandos were rigorously trained, and during the war they were used in dangerous, behind-enemy lines missions. He never went into battle because the war ended.

The two of us went sightseeing in Bristol until late at night, at which point we got absolutely lost and needed help. We spotted two persons so we approached them. They were two women, probably a mother and daughter. They were startled and took us for rapists. The mother stepped forward to protect the daughter and was ready to scream. We stopped where we were and from a distance asked for help with directions. They were relieved! We offered to escort them home for protection, but they declined and left.

I heard that Wiesiek later fell in love with an English girl, but she dumped him. He then became a priest. We lost contact and I never heard of him again.

1948 03 20 six day vacation to Edinburgh (all on my own)

This is as far north as I went into Scotland. Apart from the castle, I remember best the Edinburgh Zoo. I was going along all by myself, when in front of me on a ledge I saw a live lion looking at me. No fence, nothing! I stopped and thought there surely must be some enclosure, but I could see none. I never bothered to investigate, I turned and retreated. I was not going to take a chance.

My internal struggles

During the time in Millom, I began to change. Until this point there had always been hope, enthusiasm and patriotism in my life. But now it began to be disappointment, feelings of betrayal and humiliation. At the same time, I was determined to succeed. Poland was not liberated, but had fallen into the hands of its greatest foe, Communist Russia. This in spite of our enormous human sacrifice and losses to defeat the Nazis and to aid the Allies. We had been betrayed! Even though on personal level we were okay, our families were doomed for years of oppression.

I exchanged regular letters with Aunt Halina and my sister Irka in Warsaw, Poland. They had a very difficult existence and I had hardly any money myself to be of any real help to them. It bothered me. While Polish people suffered and Russians plundered Poland, Germany was being rebuilt with the aid of America's Marshal Plan and was soon to be the most successful country in Europe. Until then I had always been around people. But going into civilian life I would be alone. It angered me that I could not be with my family. On lonely walks or at my low times I entertained murderous thoughts of hate and revenge against the Allies, but particularly towards Americans. It was president Roosevelt who more than any other person betrayed Poland and all of Eastern Europe for that matter. Britain too was short changed, the Americans declared war against Germany but not before they almost ruined Britain by selling them needed supplies at top prices. Britain

lost all their railway investments in South America. The U.S.A. became powerful at the expense of others. If I could have, I would have dropped an atomic bomb on Washington or New York in revenge. These were certainly not Christian thoughts.

Today, I know, that vengeance is God's. He will repay for all injustices done by nations or individuals. Hate and feelings of revenge destroy us and do nothing to our enemies. They give Satan a foothold to destroy our lives. I should have turned to God and put my trust in him instead.

*Romans 12:19 **Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. (NIV)***

At this time my sister sent me, from Poland, my birth certificate, all my school papers, photographs and personal belongings. From then on I could look through my family pictures which would prevent me from ever losing memories of my childhood.

1948 08 28 I graduated as a top student and received Polish Matriculation and Polish Technical Diploma.



I receive my diploma at the end of studies



I found temporary work in a camp office to gain time so I could arrange my relocation to London, near schools and other opportunities.

1948 09 18 - 1948 10 02 three weeks vacation to London

Before going on my vacation to London, I put in an application to the Polish University College in London, formed for ex-servicemen to complete their education. Many Polish soldiers, who most deserved to get into studies had difficulties qualifying. Younger men, like me, had a better chance.

By the way

Upon my application to the Polish University College, my Millom professor, Maximowicz expressed publicly his opinion about me that "I was not university material". That is the kind of support I was getting. It is tough when you are on your own and all there is, is competition and envy. I missed having my family.

I stayed with a friend while in London, who rented a room from a Polish Colonel. The Colonel liked me so he said he would put in a good word for me. Later when I passed the exam, I wondered if his word had helped.

In the meantime, I set out looking for a job, any job, so I could return to London and not be pressured by the authorities, to work in the coal mines or textile factories. I was walking along a street full of little factories and shops, very tired from walking for hours, and I was looking for a place to rest. There in a doorway sat an elderly gentleman in a white overcoat having a lunch break. He struck up a conversation with me, so I sat next to him and chatted. I was in my army uniform with the Polish label on both shoulders. The end result was that he offered me a job, poorly paid but he would train me himself. He gave me a paper, which I needed in the camp. My search was over. I returned to camp and was free to return to London.

By the way

When I look back today, I don't understand why I was not looking for a drafting job – as that is what I was good at.

I never told the man who has offered this job to me, that I applied to university, and there was some likelihood that I would quit the job. I did get admitted to university, and few weeks later had to hand him my resignation. To this day, I feel guilty about that.

To be discharged from the military to civilian life I had to go to a military camp other than my own. There I received my discharge papers, a civilian suit in exchange for my military uniform and some cash for my immediate expenses. In this camp I met Mat Morawski; it was the only brief meeting we both had. It would take us 18 years before we got together again in Toronto.

My military service was over. I was in the army from August 1944 to December 1948, four-and-a-half years. From the age of 17 to the age of 21. Now I was on my own – literally! From the start of the Warsaw Uprising - during the Uprising, in POW camps, in Switzerland, Italy and in Millom - I was supported by others. I did not have to earn my living, manage my budget, shop or cook for myself. How would I manage all this? I had no idea! I was certainly not shown how to do it – I would have to figure it out for myself.

I had no family, no support system whatsoever, and I was unaware of where else I could seek help. For me it was always “work or perish”. After my wartime experience with my aunt's support, I no longer wanted to depend on other individuals. I dreaded the idea of relying on other people. At this point in time it was either work or earn a scholarship to university. I prayed for the latter.

BARLETTA
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
D. P. INDEX CARD
I 3028980
1 (Registration number)
Urbanowicz Andrzej
2 (Family name) (Other given names)
Urbanowicz Andrzej
3 (Signature of holder) D. P. 1

The insignia of the 2nd Polish Corps under command of general Anders



Why I wrote “My Spiritual Journey” Volume 1?

At this point of my spiritual journey I had learned two important lessons:

Lesson 1 - It is all about freedom

It seems to me that freedom is the least appreciated of all our social rights – until it is lost. I am not talking of anarchy or lawlessness, but of our fundamental rights to be free and to be who we are. Normally we do not think about such freedom, yet there are forces at work that systematically try to attack and corrupt the status quo to gain power over us.

Once freedom is lost we get exposed to brutality, torture, injustice of unimaginable proportions. It is easier to lose freedom than to regain it. I urge you to stand for true freedom and be ready to defend it, even with your life.

At this point I reached these undeniable conclusions:

**In this world there is a struggle going on between “Good” and “Evil”
Man’s depravity is deeply rooted and universal**

Yes, there are always exceptions, a small minority that manages to escape that mindless, self-destructive prevailing culture. In all walks of life, whether science, philosophy, spiritual or cultural there are individuals that break through with a better vision. They stand up above the crowd by showing wisdom, understanding, character, compassion and courage. Often they are met with opposition and ridicule. Yet they represent a way out and a hope for the future.

This leads me to another conclusion: **There always is a small minority who gets it right**

It is my hope that you have the courage to search for and find the truth, the life and peace in your soul.

Lesson 2 – is about justice

During WWII Poland was betrayed twice by the Allies (in 1939 and 1945)

After the war, the aggressor (Germany) was rebuilt under the Marshall Plan and grew to become an economic powerhouse in Europe.

While Poland was subjected to an additional 45 years of oppression under a hostile occupant (Soviet Union), and struggled to rebuild on its own, even as it was being exploited.

Justice was not served!

This leads me to another conclusion: **Do not expect justice in this world.**

If you believe, as I do, that justice must prevail, then look for justice beyond the world we live in. Ultimate justice comes from God

It is my hope that when you are faced with injustice, you do not despair as I did, but turn to God instead.