Me and the war.

It may be a funny title: "Me and the War", but when I set out to write down these memories, I wanted to present my personal feelings and the history of my closest family during and after the war. The composition of my immediate family: I was 32 years old at 39. Tulu (my husband) 36 years old. Husband's mother (Babcia) 70 years old, eldest daughter Lila 6 years old, son Otuś 2 years old, Ania was born on 11-X-1939. There was also a girl – a domestic help – Hela. At that time, we lived in Krzemieniec on Objazdowa Street. Tulu was a teacher at the T. Czacki High School in Kremenec and the head of the natural history department at the "Museum of the Krzemieniec Land". I didn't teach at that time.

In May 1939, children fell ill with scarlet fever — in fact, it has nothing to do with the war, and yet. The children were seriously ill, especially Otuś, and then I made a decision that if the children recovered, I would give to the church what I had most precious — our wedding rings. The war broke out — the government announced an appeal to fund the national treasury, so we gave our wedding rings as a gift. We often talked about the fact that someone probably took them and ran away (thousands of people fled) abroad, but deep down I did not regret and do not regret this step. My children and Poland are one. I remember how we did not leave the loudspeaker when the Germans occupied Czechoslovakia, when the announcer said goodbye to the listeners, when the Czechoslovak anthem was played for the last time. I cried then and began to realize the horror that was approaching us, and Poland.

On September 1-39, mobilization was announced. I will not mention the exact dates here, but the facts, experiences that have been fixed in my memory like paintings on a durable and accurate film. In the first days of September (or maybe at the end of August), Tadzik's mother (now my son-in-law) came to us on her way from Teremne for some treatment and asked us for advise about what to do, whether to go or return home. I advised her to go home and she did so.

Tulu got a double salary for two months, with which I bought some food such as flour, sugar, fat, cocoa (I used this cocoa to diversify my Anusia's food for a long time). I put these supplies in Babcia's locked trunk, added quite a considerable amount of preserves and juices that I had made in the summer, and we waited for the war — the war in Krzemieniec, for the war in our house. Events unfolded in an avalanche, People rolled through our house and our yard as if in a kaleidoscope.

The yard is full of cars. Refugees from western and central Poland fled in droves through Krzemieniec and Żeleszczyki to Romania. At night, the route leading through Dubieńska Rogatka (a suburb of Krzemieniec) looked like a shiny snake – it was the light of vehicles, an uninterrupted stream. The noise of vehicles reached the apartment. No one expected the bombing one beautiful day (probably sometime around September 11, 1939). The fugitives went shopping for food, and there was plenty of it on the market at that time (the peasants had already heard about the approaching Soviet troops and assumed that their economies would be collectivized, and therefore they sold their belongings). With the wave of refugees, a girl about 12 years old got to Krzemieniec. She was completely alone without family — we took her in — her name was Janka. On that beautiful morning, after a consultation with Babcia, we sent Janka to the market to get plums for dumplings. Tulu went to report or give the radio to the

police. And so the bombing began. German planes descended over the square full of people and directly fired at the population with machine guns. At the same time, the entire main street was bombed, even the cemetery was seriously damaged. Many people died then. The girl - Janka jumped into the nearest hall, where she sat almost until the evening out of fear. Tulu in the abandoned police building lay down under the window and returned safe and sound. I was pregnant with Ania (Ania was born on 11-X 39), I took 2-year-old Otuś in my arms, Lila by the hand and calling Babcia ran away and took refuge in the so-called "Virgin Rocks". There were many people from nearby houses. Babcia was beside herself, rushed into the apartment and stayed at home. When we were all safely at home – me with the children and Tulu started to worry about Janka. Tulu went to the market and somehow found her and brought her home. From that day on, alarm after alarm followed. We took shelter in the basement, but in the end we didn't react to the sirens and we sat normally at home, only Lilusia sat in the basement for days and green out of fear she tried to pull us all into it. Finally, the alarms stopped, the news spread among the people that the Soviet troops were coming. The end of Poland and, as the Ukrainians used to say, "Poland is kaput". A new partition of Polish took place – it was divided between the Russians and the Germans. I cried terribly, but hung around the house, cleaning, scrubbing and crying. One of the fugitives, Marek, a miner, began to console me that he was in a worse situation because he was cut off from his family and the Germans were already there, that the world would not leave us like this. We learnt already that England had also declared war. We had been waiting since September 1-39 for the end of the war, the end of the war from one day to the next. From the first days of September, prophecies began to circulate, comments, that in a month, in 60 days, in 3 months it would be over, that somewhere the Polish nation and army were resisting the

Germans, etc. etc. I forgot to write that during the last pre-war holidays, Kazik Unold stayed with us - Hela, my sister - Kazik's mother was on a teacher's course in Zaolzie. She came to us at the beginning of September and took Kazik and went to Podlis near Kowle to teach in accordance with the orders of the Polish government. It was a terrible Ukrainian village. Some of its inhabitants robbed and killed refugees and Polish soldiers as early as September. Fortunately, nothing happened to Hela - a court was held against her composed of the entire population of the village - they had nothing against her, this court was presided over by a political commissar of the Soviet army, who was of Polish origin. Hela even became the headmistress of a 10-year school. I had heard a lot about the Bolshevik army and I wanted to see it. The Ukrainians built triumphal gates for them, welcomed them with bread and salt. They marched along the wide - (main street of Krzemieniec). The soldiers were short, thin, impoverished, walking in helmets that covered half of their faces. The Ukrainian neighbors, instead of looking at them, looked at me as my tears choked me.

Slowly, life in Krzemieniec began to normalize. Some of the Polish refugees returned to their places in the General Government, some of them, especially men, fled abroad — most of them to Romania, some were deported to Siberia, and the remnants of the Polish Army were taken prisoner by the Russians. Some were immediately murdered by the Ukrainians.

One of those who tried to get abroad was Witold Duda - Lotek. He visited us in Krzemieniec, somewhere around 15 October-39, said goodbye (he was "in Polish times" the head of the post office in Stalowa Wola and a lieutenant of the reserve) and set off in the direction of Zdeszczyki. At the border, he was caught by the Soviets and taken to a penal camp in the Komi Republic. Since I am writing about him, I will finish his story. Only after a year did

he write a laconic postcard to us from the camp saying that he was healthy. That was all we heard about him during the war. It was only after the war that we me made contacted and found out how he survived. After receiving the postcard, we prepared a package (rusks with eggs and milk, garlic, linden blossoms and some bacon) and sent it with great difficulty - I drove with it all the way to Smyga near Krzemieniec - the Bolsheviks made it difficult to send parcels (the weight of the parcel could not exceed 2 kg) Each time they designated different drop-off points and times. This package supposedly saved his life, because he was already dying of hunger. When an agreement was reached between Stalin and Sikorski, Lotek joined Anders' Army. On the way, he married Danka Musiałówna, who was also deported to Siberia. Lotek fought in Italy near Ancona. He left the army after the war as a captain. He was in England and then went to Argentina to Barilosha. He has a son, Andrzej, who is already married, and an adopted daughter. Now he would like to return to Poland.

But getting back to us. I was about to give birth. The yard was empty of refugees. The fostered girl went back to her parents. On 9-X, snow fell unexpectedly. I, fearing that the vegetables would freeze in the garden, picked them from under the snow and carried them wet and heavy to the basement, and this may have accelerated the birth. Around 12 o'clock in the morning, I sent Tulu to get a midwife. Babcia felt unwell, so I lit a fire under the kitchen myself, put on water, prepared the swaddling cloth and shirts. Before the midwife washed her hands, Anusia was born. A brave, smart girl. Courageous to the point of risk. She has already been on two "women's cruises" (there were four women), currently, as I write, she is sailing only with Krysia on a small club yacht across the Baltic Sea to the Gulf of Finland. I was always worried about her but now I am terribly worried, because they almost paid with their lives on the previous cruise. At first, Babcia

was sad that it was not a boy, but after a few days she liked Anusia very much. I only lay down for three days, and even that was on and off, because I had to bathe and change the baby myself - the midwife did not come and Babcia was afraid.

After Anusia was born, beautiful weather came. It was then that Tula's brother Lotek came to us. Tulu taught in two Ukrainian schools. Polish schools had been closed. I was a "housewife". To maintain, or rather feed a family was quite an art. You had to stand in queues for everything, and they were huge, because a lot of Jews fled to Kzemieniec from the General Government. I sometimes went out at midnight to bring 25 dkg of sugar, or at most 1/2 kg, and I often came back empty-handed. Sometimes I managed to get some (very poor) candy and then there were feasts, because even the adults could drink tea "as a snack". Sugar was only for children. Queues for bread. I usually brought home wholemeal bread — we like rye bread, but the children, especially little Ania, didn't like it. Queues for flour, queues for salt. Polish textile materials disappeared like camphor, some where sold out in September, and the rest was confiscated by the Bolshevik authorities and carried off. From time to time, transports from Russia passed by, but these were incredibly poor materials. Mostly printed, faded calico. I once bought a few meters (after standing in a huge queue) – Babcia sewed pajamas for the children and I sewed myself a dress. In the first wash my pajamas started falling apart and after the next queue the dress looked like a rag. They tore my dress in that queue. I borrowed 1 safety pin and that's how I came home. There was no laundry soap. I made lye from ash and soaped the dirty parts of the underwear lightly with toilet soap, because you could buy such soap from time to time. Bed linen was scrubbed on both sides. Tulu had mostly light coloured typical shirts with sleeves.

Washing those was sheer torment — of course in the traditional way, in a washtub with a washboard.

The peasants did not want to accept money for milk, so I gave away coats, shoes, curtains from home, because the children had to have milk. Fuel disappeared and so almost from the beginning of the war until the we escaped from Krzemieniec, we burned what I had dragged from the forest or stolen from the surrounding fences. In the forest, I looked for the longest possible branches, tied the thicker part, put it on my shoulder and dragged it home. My left arm was swollen and sore. There was peat in the vicinity of Krzemieniec, but they sold it only to Ukrainians or those who worked with it. I also went to Sapanów. I worked literally for bread and water. I slept at a peasant's house on hay, and then it was already dangerous, because the peasants were getting ready to murder Poles. I stacked the peat in small piles on a measured-out area. In the evening I could not straighten my back, and blood was coming from the tips of my fingers. Nevertheless, I persevered for several days and brought home large carts of peat. It was a treasure because winter was approaching and I didn't have the strength to go to the forest anymore. I brought this peat before the war between the USSR and Germany and during the German occupation. A Pole simply had no right to go to the forest, because both the Germans and the Ukrainians threatened us with death. Luckily, Babcia was at home, who took care of the children, because I was constantly "on the go", in queues, exchanging clothes for food, or in the forest to get a tree.

Until the war with Germany, we were terribly afraid of being deported to Siberia. Initially, the families of the military, policemen, forest services, senior officials, families of suspects were deported, and we were one of them, because Tulu's brother Witold was in a penal camp in Siberia. All Poles were "suspicious", even refugees from the General Government.

Fearing deportation, I constantly kept bread rusks, dry pasta, and I breastfed Ania until she was a year and a half. Because Tulu was working, organizing a baptism was hard, and we were waiting for the end of the war and then the baptism would take place solemnly with the family. Meanwhile, the war was not over and Ania was growing, so as a one-and-a-half-year-old girl she walked with her grandmother and me to church. Our friend Mr. Werner and Balcia "held" her for the baptism. I write in quotation marks "they held" because I remember that Ania in a long cream dress made from my pre-war ball gown stood alone on a chest in the sacristy. Ania was already running and talking well. Despite the hard times, Ania was thriving. She started walking in the ninth month. My grandmother was very happy to become a godmother, after her second grandmother (my mother) she received a name that I like very much — Joanna. As I have already mentioned, I was constantly in a hurry, but my grandmother told the children beautiful fairy tales that she made up herself, read to them, fed them. I also read them a little, especially poems by Porazińska. I remember that I added melodies to almost all the poems and read them "singingly", and after that, as I taught, I also "sang" in the first grades. Before the war, Lilusia passed her first entrance exam to the 1st grade of the model school attached to the Lyceum. Naturally, she passed it well, especially when it came to colours. In September 1939 Lila started attending first grade, but since "Poland was sinking" the language of instruction was Ukrainian, and Lila didn't know it at all — anyway, we were expecting the end of the war any day now, so we took Lila out of school. I remember that the school took place on Sunday as well, and that also discouraged me and Lila stayed at home. I sporadically taught her to read and write, she learned quickly, but it was harder with arithmetic, yet only now do I realize how bright Lila was—for she mastered all four operations, first within twenty and then within a hundred, without any concrete examples or

lengthy explanations. Little Otuś listened to fairy tales and rode a lot on a bicycle with his dad. Otuś was born with black hair — I was also a brunette and when I walked with Otuś, everyone took us for Jews. The children had only a few toys. Before the war, Otuś got a toy monkey and with it we ran away from Krzemieniec. This monkey was still around when we were in Helena in Sącz. I regret not having kept it. Instead of toys, the children had plenty of little books, paints, paper, and crayons. Otuś started drawing tiny people early on - whole pages were full of [drawing of stick figures] and I sang to them

I'm an old man, old man
What will I eat, eat
I'll go to the market
buy myself a loaf of bread
I'll eat it, eat it
" " ".

Those were the nicest moments in those macabre times. One could not accept the fact that everything was "gone to ruin", as the Ukrainians said. I thought I could keep it all together so long as the house was clean. I don't know where my strength and energy came from. The first Easter holidays were approaching. I baked some cookies and bought a quarter of a pig from a clandestine slaughter. I made sausages. I polished the floors, washed the pavements. They were most wonderful holidays of the entire war. There were even some spirits in the house, which Tulu received as part of a share from the Krzemieniec Regional Museum. I bartered that spirit with the peasants for food. Tulu slept in a separate room, with a stack of books at his side as he prepared for lessons. I shared the bedroom with the children and

Babcia. At midnight I hear the sound of sleigh bells (although it was Easter, it was snowing – the holidays fell in March). It was the time of deportation to Siberia. There was a pounding at the door from the courtyard. I opened it in my nightgown, and several Bolshevik soldiers stormed into the house. One took position at the door with his rifle, while the others fanned out through the rooms. To take Tulu. They did a search, looked through the books. Babcia, unwell and was shaking with fear, begging the soldiers for her son's life. Then.... They ordered me to give them vodka (I diluted our entire supply of spirits with juice), I served them our remaining meat, bacon, garlic and onions. They drank, ate, wrestled with each other, and at the same time messed up the whole house, and left in the morning. I had a hard time putting the house in order.

The matter of the relatives – the Majeks.

At the beginning of the war, Gena Majkowa - Tulu's maternal cousin - wrote to us. She wrote that her husband Adam - the head of the school in Małoryt near Chełm Lubelski - had died, she (his wife) was left without means of living with three children. After some discussion, we wrote to her, asking her to come and live with us, saying that together we would somehow scrape by. Even in wartime, I kept the house neat—the floors polished and the bedding clean. We welcomed her as one of our own, into our beds and our shared kitchen. After a short time I realized that lice had come to us from them, and from then on almost the whole war it was lice and lice—and there was no soap or soda, whether under the Bolsheviks or the Germans. The second issue was eating together. Genia didn't want to give up good food. She sulked when, for example, milk soups were half and half with water, when I divided the meat into several dinners. The third

issue was her eldest son, Tadzik. This boy was about 14 years old at the beginning of the war and was addicted to stealing. He robbed us, robbed his mother, "tricked" our friends by referring to our kindship with him. I suppose it's the parents' fault. He came from twins. His brother died, and Tadzik's parents doted over him and allowed him to do everything. At the time they came to us, Tadzik was about 14 years old, Krysia was about 3 years old and Ceśiu was about 2 years old. At that time, we occupied 3 rooms, a balcony and a kitchen. I could not bear Tadek, so I kept my distance — giving them one room and a place in the kitchen. Genia went to work at the brewery. We might have managed to live together under one roof, if not for Tadek. Even the Militia came to us because of Tadek. There was no escape—we had to move out. The owners of the vacant apartment demanded six months' rent in advance. For this purpose, we sold my gold "Omega" watch, Tulu's clothes, added from Tulu's wages and moved. We were, as they say, completely "broke", without money, without food, but the house on Lipowa Street was quiet. Not for long, however, because soon the war between Germany and the USSR broke out.

We lived on the first floor on Lipowa Street. We also had 3 rooms, a balcony, a small kitchen. One room was hung with beautiful display cases of insects. The cabinets were made by a carpenter according to Tulu's design, at our expense. The beautiful collections remained in the Krzemieniec Museum. Their labour and value really priceless. Ever since I met Tulu, he has been constantly collecting something, there has not been a single trip that would take place without a purpose, above all catching insects and collecting plants. At night, we went out with white sheets and flashlights to catch moths. All our belongings remained in Krzemieniec: insects, plant collections, books, paintings, furniture, dishes, bedding.

The Germans

One day Tulu came back from a conference and said that something was "brewing" and that the Russian inspector was calming the teachers and advising them to go for a walk to Mount Bona (were there are still are ruins of Bona's castle. From this mountain there is a beautiful view of Krzemieniec and the surrounding area). The next day there was commotion in town. There was nothing to eat in the house. I took Ania in my arms and stood in a "queue" for bread. I was standing on Szeroka Street, when suddenly the shooting began, two Germans on a motorcycle appeared on the street. Fortunately, Tulu came from our house, looked for me, grabbed Ania in his arms and we jumped into the stream flowing right behind the houses. The streets were emptied immediately. We went along the stream, ran across Szeroka Street, then dashed into our street and home, but without bread, which we constantly lacked from then on. From that time hunger entered our house. One enemy fled - another seized us. Just before the Germans entered, the Soviets murdered all the prisoners. People returned from prison crying, and some recognized among the brutally murdered — their own relatives and acquaintances.

Famine during the German occupation

Tulu worked in the Museum, an institution the Germans only pretended to tolerate, but in fact tried to destroy. They gave orders, for example, to empty the existing museum premises in one day. The employees scrambled to find another location and carried the exhibits on their backs. I remember that Tulu earned so little that a month's "salary" could only buy you one kg of

butter on the "black market". It was a sacrificial work, but the museum survived and is still there today, along with Tulu’s insect display cases and huge collection of plant.

Food rations were not even enough to support one person, and here three children and three adults had to be fed. Once a week I brought 3/4 of barley bread, which we immediately ate (the next day it became bitter and crumbled like sawdust), a bit of disgusting marmalade and from time to time a dozen or so dkg of meat. I exchanged whatever was at home for food. Coats, curtains, leather briefcases (people made shoes out of them), paintings. For Babcia’s black coat with a selskin collar i got almost one meter of wheat. It was a treasure. We ground that golden grain in a hand-mill hidden from the Germans. rom the flour I made [zalewka — a kind of flour soup or gruel], dumplings, and from the bran I mixed in grated red beets and baked flat cakes on the stove. The mother of our landlords, who was staying in the countryside with the son of the Orthodox priest, found out about this wheat. She asked to “borrow” it, because she wanted to grind a larger quantity and promised to bring it back from the village right away. She took it, and that was the last we saw of it. It was inhuman, because the Ukrainians were favorites of the Germans and had enough food. For example, I replaced beautiful curtains for 25 kg of millet groats. For a whole month we ate nothing but this groats and 1 liter of milk a day. I received 30 liters of milk for two beautiful, hand-embroidered pictures of the Virgin Mary and the Lord Jesus. Tulu, returning from work, secretly received 2-3 sugar beets, from which I baked pancakes with the addition of bran, or boiled them down to make "honey". Another time I exchanged some old pieces of clothing for a little rye, which Tulu and I ground on the museum’s hand-mill. For some time I kept two students, the children of the Orthodox priest "as boarders". The payment was food: some potatoes, flour and

bacon. It was a paradise, but it lasted for a short time, because the Orthodox priest took his children away from the Poles. For a time Mr. Niedźwiecki lived with us. He had family in the village and therefore his own food supply. He paid us something for lodgings, but I would “pinch a little here and there” from him. I remember once, starving, I ate a piece of sausage and fell terribly ill – *“Stolen food never fattens.”* . This Mr. Niedźwiecki was a great patriot, he went to Warsaw, took part in the uprising and reportedly died. I write "went" but this was in fact an escape made at the risk of life. Tulu brought caustic soda from the Museum, and we made soap. Soap was made not only from tallow, which was very difficult to obtain, but also from eggs, chickens, carcasses with the addition of peas for better foaming. I walked around villages with these "goods" and exchanged them for what I could, and it was already dangerous - Ukrainians were getting ready to murder Poles. Tulu got a bucket of salt from the Museum (I don’t know how that salt came to be there). The director at that time was Ukrainian, he could have given us more, but he preferred to give it to his own, some of them even got a metre of salt. There was also a shortage of salt during the German occupation. This salt also saved us a bit. I remember that once I exchanged a chicken for 1 cup of salt. Unfortunately, the hen either fell ill with us, or the old woman had already given us a sick one. I couldn't come to terms with the loss of my hen. I poured water on her to wake her up, and poured sour milk into her beak, and cured the hen. In the past, my Ukrainian neighbor used to kill poultry for me, now she didn't want to for a Polish woman. Tulu did this task. He took the hen and cut off its head on a stump, but he came out of the shed so pale that I never again asked him to do such a thing. And this food also had to be shared with one Jewish woman. The Germans, or rather the Ukrainian militia, drove Jews from the ghetto to work. On the way, a Jewish woman came to us with a request for food. I always gave her something,

whether it be a few potatoes or a handful of some groats. Once, I literally had nothing at home and as proof I showed her peelings from the last potatoes. The peelings where thin (it is said in our country that Kreków was visible through them), but I gave them to her at her request. In general, potatoes were a delicacy. I usually cooked them in their skins. Once I had only a few, not enough to eat on thie own. So I made dumplings from them, and since I only had rye flour, I kneaded a dough from it, I "greased" the dumplings with onion browned in a little cream. The children were very happy. Lila even wrote about it in her diary (it was lost somewhere, a great pity). Once, we got some poor plums from a museum co-worker (it was Obolończyk — today he is a doctor in Kiev). I also kneaded a dough from wholemeal flour and made "dumplings", poured saccharin dissolved in water over them. Otuś called to his peer Dzidka Targońska from the balcony or from the window that we had dumplings for dinner. Tulu got some food by cycling to Hela who lived in Chodaki. He brought cabbage from her and a little groats. The rides were dangerous, because the Ukrainians were already getting ready for the Poles. Tulu would take long detours and ride around the villages. Once, he took his winter coat to a peasant for exchange. He got a goose for it and some honey. It was a feast for several days. Sometimes one of the Unolds came to visit us - (Jan from Szumsk or Apolinary from Chodaki). Almost always they brought meat from clandestine slaughter to sell. I distributed it among acquaintances. It was a very dangerous business in those days. For such things the Germans even punished by death. I kept the larger scraps for myself, for which I also paid them. In truth, we need not have gone hungry, because the Unolds lived in the countryside and had food in abundance. But, as the saying goes, *the full do not believe the hungry* — and they perished. Our drinks were tea made from roasted apple peels, linden blossoms or strawberry leaves. I think the best was from strawberry leaves. I

also tried to make acorn coffee from roasted halves, but it was Sisyphean work because I could never grind them or even crush them in a mortar. I wrote so much about this hunger, but it was a huge problem that actually rested on me.

The death of Babcia Dudowa

This, too, was connected with hunger. Babcia was full of life and if it hadn't been for the war, she would have lived much longer. She liked meat and fats, but then suddenly came hunger, so she lost a lot of strength. Once Julek Unold (Aunt Hela's husband) came to Krzemieniec with a consignment of tobacco. He came to us and persuaded me to go to Chodaki (40 km away), so I would bring back some food. I gathered together the last scraps of clothing to trade, and was just about to leave, when Babcia made a fuss about leaving them alone. I explain that I'll bring home some bacon, flour, butter, but Babcia was still angry. I was already downstairs and was supposed to get on the cart, but "something struck me". I turned back and cordially said goodbye to Babcia. To this day, I regret that I left then, because Babcia would have lived longer. In Chodaki, I exchanged my clothes mainly for fat and every day I went to the mill to grind wheat, because Julek told me that however much I ground, I could take that much back to Krzemieniec. Hela and I went together (Hela was pregnant with Alek) because they too were grinding for themselves at the mill. I was terribly impatient, but a neighbour who was also meant to go with a consignment of tobacco, delayed the departure because the Germans did not allow anyone to leave Chodaki. I think it was only after 10 days that I left Chodaki and on the way I received a telegram in Szumsk that Babcia was dead. It was at the end of winter. The house was cold. To get to the kitchen you had to pass through the hallway — the kitchen stood above the stairs. Babcia

warmed herself by the stove in the room, but went into the kitchen to cook something for the children, and she must have caught pneumonia. By the time Tulu realised and called for a doctor, it was already too late. Had I been there, maybe she wouldn't have taken a chill, or I would have put cupping glasses on Babcia right away and she would have been saved. I cried a lot and still grieve for her. I know that if she were alive, she would be about 100 years old now, but I regret that she doesn't watch TV, doesn't listen to music, and she was very musical. She doesn’t rejoice in her grandchildren — or perhaps she does?! I beg my mother for protection over my children, and perhaps I should also ask her, Babcia Duda, for it? Tulu and I erected a monument on her grave (three years ago in 1970), and somehow it eases me. During her lifetime, she went for a walks to the "Tunicki Cemetery", sat on the grave of Słowacki's mother and told Lila that she would bring her (Babci) flowers because she wanted to be buried here. This is what happened - Her grave is located right next to the grave of Salomea Słowacka. I remember that I sewed tights from my red sweater for Ania (from the sleeves) and for Otuś (from the back). The children (Ania and Otuś) did not understand death and chased each other around the coffin. Babcia's old harmonium was left in a trunk in Krzemieniec.

The Jews

We were then living in a little upstairs flat, and right after the Germans entered, some Jews moved in downstairs. It was a very wealthy, childless family. They wanted to store some things with us. Tulu, however, absolutely did not want to agree. Once, when we both left the house, they begged Babcia and actually forcibly brought a pile of suitcases and beautiful fluffy blankets. I came back from town and "laid into" Babcia with reproaches. Tulu

returned and firmly told me to take this baggage back to the Jews. Tulu believed that storing and even more, using the possessions of Jews so cruelly persecuted would bring misfortune down upon us. Maybe he was right?! I gave it back and I don't regret it. The Jews were taken to the ghetto — surely they perished. It is monstrous, a terrible disgrace for the Germans and Ukrainians, who wholeheartedly helped to liquidate and persecute the Jews. I remember how the ghetto burned, how shooting broke out because the Jews defended themselves. I walked about as if insane, my head constantly aching. And yet one had to go on living. I gathered a whole bag of old shoes to repair three of the best pairs. It was unfortunate that the shoemaker lived opposite the gate to the ghetto. I saw a car leaving it. It was a truck loaded with Jews. They were crowded, crouched down, because on their backs lay a huge wooden plank and on it sat several Ukrainian militiamen with rifles ready to shoot. Tulu's pupil saw with his own eyes how over the common graves, planks had been laid, on which naked undressed Jews stood and were shot by the Gestapo. They had machine guns rested on stands, when they got tired of killing, they lit a cigarette, ate and continued "to work". The next day, over the graves covered with lime and earth they drove a road roller.

One day, shortly after the Germans entered, I went and stood in line for bread. Because I was taken for a Jewess, the Ukrainians began to murmur and look at me with hostility. Fortunately, there was a neighbor (a Pole) standing nearby, who had lived in Krzemieniec since birth and was therefore better known than me, and she began to explain that I was a Catholic Pole, not a Jew.

However I did not get bread, even though I showed the shopkeeper my chain with the Virgin Mary, and I witnessed a cruel scene. I heard commotion and shouting coming from the entryway next door and saw a Jew in a caftan with sidelocks run

out into the street. Several people ran after him and they were joined by "people" from the queue, who grabbed stones and literally stoned this Jew. The street was neither cobbled nor paved. Once I saw an old Jewish woman carrying two wooden watering cans with water on a yoke, the road went uphill, and down it came a sleigh with the driver standing on it. The peasant deliberately ran over the Jewish woman, who got under the sleigh and was being dragged screaming, while the peasant kept cracking the whip and did not stop. I was also screaming in horror.

The Ukrainians

Poles in the General Government were terribly persecuted by the Germans, but it was probably even worse for us in the so-called Ukraine. In the General Government there were Germans versus Poles, but here another terrible enemy joined: the Ukrainians, and we were a minority. The Ukrainians were on par with the Germans. They were the ones who handed us over to the Bolsheviks and then to the Germans. It was they who handed over such really valuable people to death (Prof. Opolski, Mączak, Sawojcówna, Torgoński, Szynajowiecz and many others). This same fate awaited us and above all Tutu, but the eastern front began to approach and we escaped. Prof. Mączak was the founder of the Museum, Dr. Opolski wrote a dissertation on Nazism before the war. Nothing is heard about Ukrainians staying and dying in concentration camps. Ania had some severe pains, at times she cried. No wonder if, for example, there was only rye flour at home (Maybe that's why I don't like rye bread to this day). So I took Ania in my arms and went to the " Gebietskommissar" to get semolina for her. I waited for perhaps two hours before I was admitted to the dignitary’s presence. I emphasised to the

Ukrainian translator my request, and they chattered among themselves and gave me not even 25 dkg of semolia. The Ukrainians had first betrayed us and denounced us to the Bolsheviks — so many of us would not have been deported to Siberia, taken to prisons or shot if it had not been for the Ukrainians. As soon as the war began, Ukrainians contacted the Germans through radio transmitters, murdered arrivals from Western Poland and so on and so forth.

The death of Julek Unold, his brothers, the death of thousands of Poles at the hands of Ukrainians.

Denunciations of Poles, arrests by the Germans and murders of them continued all the time. Then the Ukrainians themselves began to murder individual Poles, then entire villages and settlements. At Easter, news came from Chodaki that Julek Unold had been murdered, that this and that friend had died in the distrtict, and then a whole avalanche of murdered Poles, entire families with children, the elderly, entire villages. Poles defended themselves, fled to larger settlements - organized themselves (Read "Red Nights" by Cybulski). Many Poles from the surrounding villages found themselves in Krzemieniec, entire phalanxes of refugees were already heading to Kremenets under the cover of German rifles. For some time I went out every day to "Wiśniowiecka Rogatka" and waited with tears for Hela and her children. I saw these poor people, some on wagons, others on foot with bundles and children. They slept on planks in the lyceum church and dispersed to Polish homes, yet from the Germans, too, there still awaited the danger of deportation for forced labour in Germany. The Polish inhabitants of Krzemieniec organized helped them as best they could. Mrs. Doroszukiewicz and I also cooked a bucket of soup a few times. We contributed

together for it. Usually it was potatoes with dumplings. The soup was with fat. I went round to the Ukrainian neighbours and demanded fat from them outright. Some gave like the Skibinieckis, others, such as the fanatical Ukrainian Turkova did not want to give even a slice. When, indignant and shaken, I spoke of it, she replied to me: *“Well, when they chop wood, the chips will fly*". Phalanxes — whole convoys of Poles abandoned their settlements, until at last, in one such convoy, was Unoldowa Maria with her two children — the wife of Jan Unold, cruelly murdered in Szumsk. She came to live with us. Right after our escape from Krzemieniec she also managed to escape. She lived in Opole. Her children got educated got married. She has already died of cancer. Hela, meanwhile, fled with her children to Ostroga - from there to Bożęcin near Tarnów, where at that time two of our brothers Kazek and Staszek lived. Of the four Unold brothers only one, Apolinary, was saved by a miracle and three were killed. One of them, Florian - the head of the school near Kowel, was killed together with his wife Danka just at Easter. The nine-year-old eldest son (Zbyszek) and his two younger brothers (one an infant) survived. The godparents of one of them from Kowel took care of them, but when later they were fleeing from Kowel the youngest little boy was shot and also died. The eldest, Zbyszek, himself buried his mother and father with only an adolescent Ukrainian friend for help. The sołtys [village headman] was afraid to take care of the burial because it was not permitted to bury “Lachów [Poles]”. He was afraid to give these children a cart so that they could go to Kowel. The son of our landlady was a militiaman. We had a bicycle and he borrowed it almost every day. Tulu would came from the museum and shout at me why I lent out the bicycle. I went to them as if to an execution and asked for its return (they lived in the courtyard, in the outbuilding). They returned it to me with a gloomy face. It was like that a dozen

or so times, but we saved the bicycle and sold it just before our escape from Krzemieniec.

One day, people began to hang around the yard talking to each other in Ukrainian. I ask them what they are doing here, and they say that they escaped from Rybcza (a village near Krzemieniec) from the Ukrainians. Surprised, I said that they murder Poles, not Ukrainians — then I got the reply that they are Poles, but did not speak Polish. The Ukrainians did not ask whether someone's ancestors had lived on this land for generations, they murdered, and they also murdered mixed marriages.

Our children in time of war

The one who suffered most in those times was Lilusia, who in 1939 was six years old. She would hide in the cellar during the air-raid alarms. With all her strength she wanted there to be a home, but everything was falling apart. She had enlarged lymph nodes, and I was terribly worried about her. In our family three siblings had died of tuberculosis. Tulu's brother also died of tuberculosis. As soon as I left the house I cried and here the child is starving. Our neighbour's husband, Mr Kruczkowski, was the manager of a state-owned estate and thus a German one. At that time they lived in the countryside in manor house (in Buchłów), and they had everything in abundance. They proposed taking Lila to stay with them for a time.

She was well cared for, with a wonderful food: dairy, meat, fruit, but what of it, Lila sought out secluded places in the park and cried. A visiting doctor said that he was crying for home. Tulu rode his bike and had to take her home. She insisted that for one Easter (it was our last Easter there) the house be whitewashed. At that time my arm was broken and in a cast, fortunately the left

one, so with my right hand I whitewashed and cleaned. Her first Holy Communion took place in the high school church. She had only very little preparation. Her dress was borrowed, and her wooden sandals made by Tulu. The uppers were cut from my white felt hat. I prepared the wreath and the candle, and I let down her beautiful hair, at that time she had long braids. When the Polish neighbors found out that Lila was going to her First Holy Communion, they brought her a veil at the last moment and fastened it on her head themselves. Babcia did not live to see that moment and Lila went to church alone for I had no one to leave the children with. And I was ashamed to go with them, because I had nothing in which to dress them. I didn't have much time to devote to her education and Tulu didn't know how. When she almost learned to read and write on her own, Tulu gave her his student "textbooks" and told her to read them aloud. Naturally, she herself told me later that she didn't understand any of them. In general, during the entire duration of the war, as I calculated, Lila went to school for only 15 months. A few months in Zmigród, a few weeks in Turza and a few months in Zawada. In Nowy Sącz she immediately went to high school. In some subjects she had an excellent grasp — in others she had not the slightest idea. In his spare time Tulu painted, and he also gave Lila paints and cardboard. I remember her first picture: it was a fir branch in a little vase. Where are you now, my Lilusia?!

Otuś was 2 years old at the outbreak of the war. Like Lila, he had already been through scarlet fever. Lila had enlarged lymph nodes, and Otuś had a heart murmur. The child was growing, but there was nothing to clothe him in. I didn't know how to sew, and it was just a misfortune, because even in wartime, I didn't have a machine. I've always liked embroidery since I was a child. I couldn't afford a seamstress during the war, there was no question of a hairdresser either, so I cut Otuś's hair myself "a la

pot". I stitched together some little shirts and blouses by hand, but they looked pitiful. Otuś was often ill. In Krzemieniec he came down with pneumonia, and there was neither a doctor nor medicine. We had acquaintances who worked in the German military hospital, and from them we received some pills, though I can no longer remember what they were — I also put on cupping glasses, and somehow they helped him as well as Lila. Education consisted mainly of piles of pre-war "Flames [childrens magazines]" and Babcia's stories, and from time to time I read children's books. I liked to sing to the children and I wonder how I could do it in such gruesome times. The children's education also included bicycle rides with Tulu, alternately with Otuś and Lila. They rode through forests, rode to the Ikva river until the Ukrainians started murdering, because then it was no longer possible to "stick one's nose" out of the city. I taught Otuś to read and write at the age of six during regular lessons with Bogna, Nusia's daughter. It was already after our escape from Krzemieniec. From an early age, Otuś made plan-books and liked to look at geographical atlases. I remember how, after my arm had been set, I was coming back from the hospital after spending a single night there. I returned uneasy yet happy to be going back to the children, and from a distance I saw Ania and Otuś standing on the little porch. When I began to call to them, the children disappeared into my small barrel that stood on the balcony. They thought I had lost an arm entirely, and so they hid. Anusia, as they say, was born under the bombs. As long as she was a baby, there was no problem since she had the stroller, pillow, and little shirts from Otuś, but as she grew older the worse it was. Her first little dress was made from a wall hanging of coarse grey linen. A seamstress sewed the dress, and I only embroidered stars on it. Later she had more dresses, but that one I remember the most. Babcia used to admire her wise, large eyes, but Ania remembers little of Babcia, for she was barely two years old when Babcia

died. She often cried until she was a year and a half old, apparently she had some pains, but it was hardly surprising, for sometimes even animals die from rye. She naturally had no toys. I told her when she was 3-4 how Otuś and Lila threw bananas and oranges under the bed before the war – Ania asked what look and taste these fruits had. I remember once when I got hold of sifted flour, and Ania would not eat dumplings made from it, saying she did not want such sticky dumplings. In Żmigród near Jasło she must have been about four years old, and although she was really an exceptionally clever little girl, she could not pronounce "r". Mr. Kahl — a worker at the dairy was so delighted that he would pay her to recite a little poem:

Cajma kjowa, w bojdo kjopki
Zajła tjawę, kjęcąc mojdą
Psiakjew skąd tu się tyle „j" nabjało.
[A black cow, with spotted coat,
Ate grass, twisting its muzzle.
Good grief, where did all these "j"s come from.]

The Zmigród period was a separate stage for the whole family. I tried sending Ania to the nuns (in Zmigród), who ran something like a kindergarten. I gave her a bottle of milk and a slice of bread with butter (in Zmigród Tulu worked at the dairy, which was managed by Nusia), but Ania did not want to play with the other children and stopped going. The children played best together as a foursome: Ania, Olek, Bogna, and Kazek Unold (I had taken him in from Hela, who at that time was teaching in Łęki near Bożęcin). Lila did not take part in these games. Sometimes the children went wild, with Ania leading the way and always showing the greatest courage in those games. I remember when Mrs.

Kruczkowska came to us (she also ran away from Krzemieniec and lived near Jasło). Nusia, I, and p. Kruczkowska couldn't get enough of talking with one another — the younger children were playing and Lila disappeared; after a while I found her behind the curtain in the corner (that little storage nook served us as a clothes closet), she was sitting huddled and crying.... because she couldn't bear the bustle, the loud conversation. Our children were a bit strange. I must go back to Otuś, who fell ill with pneumonia again. Ciocia Nusia had gone somewhere. I cooked dinners at her place for two households and took care of Julek, Nusia's husband, who was sick with tuberculosis. It was very hard for me to look after a bunch of children and two sick people. There was a doctor we knew, Dr. Rezacz (he was murdered by the Gestapo because he treated wounded members of the AK [Home Army]), and he prescribed and gave us prontosil and only aspirin. It seems aspirin and cupping helped best. I still have to write about the children's further "education," especially Ania's. When fate cast us all the way to Zawada near Nowy Sącz, we moved in there with our relatives, the Zarębas. Wanting to repay them, I undertook to teach their two children, Józka and Hania, to read and write. In addition, I took on two neighbors' children for lessons. Ania doggedly kept pace with these lessons, although I was essentially not teaching her, because she was probably not quite 5 then, while the other children were already 7. I did have to buy her notebooks though, and Otuś and Lila would "assign" her homework. Before long Ania was already reading newspapers, while those other children were still "stammering through" the primer.

I return again to Krzemieniec times, to the breaking of my arm. In normal times it would have been a trifle, but in wartime it was a small tragedy. I obtained, for a piece of soap, 2 liters of buckwheat, but unmilled. It was early spring when I went with it to

the hand-mill at some acquaintances' place. I ground the buckwheat, an acquaintance woman sifted off the husks for me and on top of that let me have 2 liters of milk. Overjoyed, I hurried back so as to reach home before dusk, and part of the way led through a forest. I was walking downhill and fell headlong into the ground, which was covered with ice. I braced myself with my hand and it "burst". I came down to the main road, but I didn't go into our house. I handed the backpack with milk and flour to the children and summoned Tulu, who was tutoring pupils preparing for liceal classes [upper-secondary]. Tulu took me to the hospital. My arm swelled, and at the hospital they wanted to cut the sleeve of my fur coat — my only warm garment. I didn't allow it — with difficulty they took off that fur coat and set the arm under anesthesia. The fracture was complicated and displaced, but everything knit well, and to this day I feel no pain in that arm. I had my arm in a cast for 6 weeks. It was a nightmare, because I couldn't comb the children's hair or my own. I wore two braids above my ears, which I tucked under, and that was my hairstyle. Tulu combed our hair, but very clumsily. Babcia was no longer alive then.

Christmas trees

I think in those hard times I was very resourceful and tried somehow to keep this "home" going, and there was a Christmas tree for every Christmas. On one Christmas during the German occupation, there was an announcement that under no circumstances was it allowed to have a Christmas tree, and to get it from the forest yourself was unthinkable. Two stubborn creatures, Gena Mojkowa and Gena Duda went to the nearest German estate. They found a hole in the park fence and cut down two beautiful Christmas trees in the park. It was already late at

night when we each brought a Christmas tree to our children. The underground press was a great joy for us. Often those little leaflets were barely holding together at the folds, after reading, we passed them on to a neighbor — naturally only to a Polish woman. We used to copy out various prophecies and they heartened us very much — “hope is the mother of fools”. We still have them — if I manage, I will copy them out for the children. Oh, how we awaited the end of the war. My dearest daydreams were of greeting Polish soldiers and in the depths of my soul I was sure of it, and from the start I regarded the marching Germans as defeated.

Somehow I managed to get in touch with Nusia, who was then in Zmigród. She was doing a whole heaven better than we were, but she couldn’t really help us much because from the General Government one could send packages of barely 25 dkg. Nusia sent me something like 2 times a small parcel with new stockings. Naturally I sold them at once, and with that money I bought a small iron stove with one “burner”. It helped us a great deal, because I set it up in the room and so it warmed us and at the same time I could cook on it. I almost forgot to write about one important thing. From the Muzeum Słowackiego they gave us for safekeeping the manuscript of Balladyna. Słowacki’s handwriting was like pearls, regular, clear, on splendid paper. Besides that there were also poems there, such as “Smutno mi Boże,” which Słowacki illustrated in pen. You could see he was an artist in every sense of the word. I didn’t know where to keep that treasure. I was afraid that hiding it among books they would find the manuscript in the event of a search, and yet by hiding it under mattresses I was exposing it just the same. I wrapped it in linen cloth and from time to time looked through it. The only thing the Germans did not liquidate was the Muzeum Słowackiego located in the manor where Słowacki was born. (At present the

Soviet authorities have made a library in that little house, and the exhibits in the form of furniture they have stored in the attic over the general museum. In that museum there is only a small room with two display cases in which there are some mementos of Słowacki). The curator under the Germans was Dr. Kryński, he was disabled but a very educated man, and he had a young and pretty wife. I was in that museum a few times and I liked it immensely there:,quiet, perfect order. Apple trees grew by the house, we used to get apples from them. We were in Krzemieniec three years ago and saw everything. You can clearly see they are destroying all mementos and traces of Polishness. Since I am already on cultural matters, I must also mention the fate of the enormous library that was at the Liceum im. T. Czackiego. It held all the new publications and, in addition, the so-called black and white ravens of our literature [rarities]. When the Bolsheviks entered Krzemieniec — Tulu was working at the Museum (he was head of the natural history department), so he had access to the Lyceum buildings. He came one time and almost cried, because he saw the Bolsheviks light a bonfire in the courtyard and burn and tear beautiful books. Tulu secretly rescued some, but when we fled Krzemieniec it was all lost. One fellow (I didn't remember his surname) rescued Słowacki's manuscript and managed to get to Warsaw. All trace of the manuscript was lost. If it had stayed with us it would have survived.

More about the Museum. Before the war Tulu practically devoted his life to collecting (and he still does now). As a little boy he started with matchboxes. Then he collected books, chemicals, plants, and insects (now stamps, newspapers, and of course books). He collected insects with great expertise and passion. A carpenter made him display cases at our expense. The antennae and legs were set to tenths of a millimeter, larger insects were mounted, and caterpillars, for example, were inflated. At night we

both hunted moths. Every walk was combined either with catching insects or gathering plants. Even little Lila would notice insects, which she called “eku.” Sometimes I looked askance at it, because money was tight and the display cases cost a lot. There were 32 cases. At the outbreak of the war Tulu grouped those cases at home. One room was completely hung with them. In each case there was a vial with a moth-killing agent. The cases are very airtight. When we fled Krzemieniec, Tulu gave those cases to the Museum “for safekeeping,” and so they have remained to this day. When we went back there with Tulu three years ago, we saw them—they are beautifully preserved. Tulu wanted to open them, but I advised him against it for fear that by doing so bacteria would get in and destroy the insects. These are priceless collections. The whole satisfaction in this is that the current staff treated Tulu with great respect and spoke of organizing a large exhibition of insects with Tulu’s portrait. Besides those cases, there are also in the museum plants collected by Tulu—about 2 thousand. The current staff wrote to us asking Tulu who was the founder of the Museum—naturally the one murdered by the Germans, Prof. Mączak, and not Mr Cynkałowski, who claims to be the founder.

I cried my eyes out during our stay in Krzemieniec. I like Krzemieniec very much. Two of our children were born there, Babcia’s grave is there. Lili was born in Żółkiew, which is now renamed “Niesterow.” Everyone there welcomed us like guests, even Mrs Turkowa a fierce Ukrainian gave us a jar of honey — but what of it when everyone is waiting for the Germans. For me all this gave the impression as if I were living in a grave. At moments it seemed to me I could smell corpses. And everywhere dirty, ugly. Our relatives live in old, musty houses. Old Brody is one ruin — roads rutted, holes, mud, dust. Trees cut down. Of Babcia’s little house not a trace. In general people there build very little,

and those new buildings are such makeshift little houses, without fences. Shops dirty, shabby. People very badly dressed. Women neglected, obese. Trees cut down. Krzemieniec is, outwardly, relatively little damaged and clean, which it owes to the scientific congresses held there. Cemeteries overgrown — drowning in nettles, plaques torn off Polish graves. There are no Greek Catholic churches, there are only Orthodox churches, and only old women go to them. Working people and the young are not allowed to go to church. The Catholic church in Brody has been turned into a school of physical education. The Lyceum church in Krzemieniec is boarded up with planks. The parish Catholic church is open once a month. The monastery in Podkamień has been turned into a home for the insane. In Podkamień, beautiful statues of saints lie smashed along the roads. Buses dirty, rickety. Eateries disgusting. In the shops anything of value can be obtained only with a bribe. I didn't believe Tulu when he told me about grain drying on the roadssides, until I saw it with my own eyes. Everyone drinks vodka. Divorces are an everyday occurrence. I know the present government in those lands doesn't care, but if the Ukrainians were more cultured it wouldn't be like this. I don't want to go there anymore. Tulu is drawn there, but let him go alone.

Our escape from Krzemieniec

On the "farm" we left Unold's Maria. She too soon fled after us, and the farm was taken over by Gena Majkowa. What happened to the furniture — I don't know, and there was quite a lot of it, because three rooms were furnished. Part of the bedding, dishes, and books we loaded into chests and trunks and left with neighbors "for safekeeping". We had to flee — as Krzemieniec was encircled by the blackness of the Ukrainians. In Krzemieniec,

rampaging Germans. Tula's Polish coworkers were being hunted down by the Germans one by one. Any day now Tulu might not come home from the museum. The children had long been asking me for a kitten. Downstairs in the basement lived a woman. Her cat had lovely kittens. I got one — a beautiful gray colour. We named him Szaruś [Grayie]. The children didn't want to leave the kitten in Krzemieniec and took him with them. Everyone later talked about the cat fleeing with us. Beforehand we gathered information and addresses needed for the escape. We had very little cash, because the Ukrainians didn't want to buy — they knew anyway that we wouldn't be taking our belongings with us, besides, those hyenas had enough from the Jews. We took with us the remnants of our clothes, some bedding. Tulu took along a lot of his gear, like a microscope, some special mirrors, tweezers, etc. Now Tulu says he shouldn't have taken it, but then it was hard for him to part with it. The most important things were documents and photographs. I took the kettle my mother bought me when I went to my teaching post, and which still serves us to this day. We hired a cart and loaded our "property". The children also got on it with the kitten and a toy monkey, we with Tulu went on foot into the unknown, terrifying. We did not receive a permit to leave, but at the railway station we got on the train without tickets. In the same compartment sat some Germans, but they pretended not to see us. That's how we reached Dubno. We hauled out our things and set up camp in the waiting room. Supposedly some railwayman there was to get us seats on a train bound for Brody, where Aldek — Tulu's brother, then working on the railroad was waiting for us, but there one train after another departed and we sat at the station. Tulu fainted. When I revived him and after talking it over Tulu went to the railwaymen and showed them a gold five-ruble coin — it helped. They shoved us into a train, but what of it when at Radziwiłłów they ordered us to get off. It was the border station between the so-called Ukraine

and the General Government. The next station was already Brody, and in it Aldek. The station was empty and we alone with a mountain of bundles and the children in the middle. A Polish railwayman came up to us and advised us to leave the platform quickly, because when the shift came on—and they were Ukrainians—we would be done for. We dragged our bundles and the children as best we could to the nearest house. We were lucky, because it was the house of a Polish railwayman. He settled us in a room from which, that very same day, the body of the railwayman's son — murdered by Ukrainians — had been carried to the cemetery. Well into the afternoon a railwayman from Brody arrived, who took Lila and Otuś into a freight train to a signalman's hut. He locked them in and I was terribly afraid of that separation. The children arrived safely, Aldek picked them up and apparently cried when he saw them. We were left alone with Ania in Radziwiłłów because our hosts were not there. Suddenly toward evening we heard shooting, very close by. We lay down on the floor under the windows and waited. Suddenly someone began banging on the windows, we were terribly frightened thinking they were bandits, until we heard a voice: "Mr Duda — please open up". That young, tall railwayman had come especially for us. He snatched Ania up in his arms and we took only the suitcase with documents and photographs and rushed after him to the locomotive waiting for us. On the tracks a German stopped us for a moment, but that railwayman replied energetically that he was rescuing us from bandits, and so we reached the engine. They deliberately came for us, apparently that railwayman ferried many families across to the General Government for evacuation, and he himself was killed. We got off at night in front of the station and went to the agreed house to sleep. In the morning we went to the Aldeks, where Lila and Otuś were already waiting for us. Supposedly safe, yet poor, homeless, helpless. All our belongings remained in Radziwiłłów, and only

later, when that railwayman moved to Brody, did he bring over our “treasures” too. We obtained, for a fee, fake Kennkarten (equivalents of identity cards), and we waited for Nusia, who was to come for us from Zmigrod. When Nusia saw us, she was disappointed, because she thought that after all a professor’s family would be coming, and there we were with Tulu, thin, blackened, dressed in “God help us” rags, and three scrawny children. We walked for the last time in the garden at old Brody, slept under Tula’s family roof. In that little house, during the holidays, Otuś was christened. To that little house I used to come in my maiden days and then as a married woman. In that little house Lila stayed for a time under Babcia’s care. In that little house Ania was for the first and last time. We ate fruit from the trees Tulu had planted. The cottage was charming. It had a little porch overgrown with vines, an entry hall from which one entered a room and the kitchen on the right side, and on the left there were two little rooms, separated by a thin patition that did not reach the ceiling. Wooden floors, clean and yellow, white walls. In the garden lilacs, acacias, ash trees, fruit trees, and many flowers. We had to say goodbye to the Aldeks (they then had three sons), to the cottage, and go farther—to Zmigrod near Jasło. The road was awful. In Lwów, in Podzamcze, we waited a long time and into the train drifted the stench of burning bodies. In the train, incredible crush, the children stood the whole time on the benches behind people’s backs. In their arms they held the kitten, which struggled to get free. With difficulty we reached Jasło, and from there by some truck to Zmigrod. Auntie’s little flat, clean, cozy, peaceful, but unfortunately Julek — Nusia’s husband — was already then ill with tuberculosis. Tuberculosis had already taken over his whole body, he could no longer walk for his legs were diseased too. With Nusia there then stayed Julek’s sister, Zosia Mrożkowa — the mother of the later well-known writer [Sławomir] Mrożek. I remember that for supper there were

potato dumplings. I don't remember after how many days, probably the very next day, we moved into "our own." It was a single room in a former Jewish house. Besides us, two more families lived there, the Przewłoccy and the Brożynowie. They had two-room appartments. Brożynowa came from Żmigrod, and they even had a small piece of their own land. The Przewłoccy were refugees. Mrs Przewłocka worked at the dairy. Mr Przewłocki wrote poems. The Brożyns had a little daughter, Halinka, and the Przewłockis a small foster girl, Janeczka, sickly and very improperly dressed and brought up. During the fighting at the front that child died. Tulu also worked at the dairy, and then it was a food paradise. There was lots of milk, we got cream and butter, there was bread and even meat. Nusia gave us some materials from which I sewed coats for Ania and Lila. I even refashioned clothes out of old garments for Otuś and even for Kazik Unold (he was with us too). I also sewed myself as many as two dresses. In a word, paradise compared with Krzemieniec. I remember my first trip to the seamstress, who lived outside Zmigród. I had to force myself to take that walk, because in Krzemieniec it was impossible because of the Ukrainian gangs. Just before the escape from Krzemieniec we slept with axes under our beds so that in case of an attack we could defend ourselves. Not far from us they had already murdered our acquaintance, Górecki. Our "furniture" in Zmigród was mostly from sawmill offcuts, nailed together by Tulu. There were two "couches" and a cabinet made of boards, and Nusia lent us 1 iron bed, a table, a small cabinet, and a few chairs. It was not much bigger, or perhaps the same size as our present room. During the day one couch was carried out into the vestibule. Kazik U. slept on it. He was supposed to be at Nusia's, but I took him to us because the sick Jurek had to have peace and Kazek was terribly talkative, secondly, I didn't want a starved, emaciated boy to be in contact with a consumptive. On the shelves, as usual wherever Tulu is, there were already little

stacks of newspapers. We or light. In the evenings we sat at the table, the cat strolled under our chins or across our shoulders. As usual, I did not sit idle. I often cooked dinners at Nusia's, helped her wash and clean. At our place too the floor had to be scrubbed, cooking done, etc. I taught Bogna and Otuś, and Lila even had a few piano lessons and went to school. I also went to Jasło with butter for the Germans, on those occasion I always took something to trade, most often veal, cream, butter (these were Nusia's goods), but I also took enough of ours so that for these goods the dentist repaired my and Lila's teeth. These were dangerous trips, because often at the entrance to Jasło the Germans searched us. For this purpose I took Lila and hid the goods under the seat, in the back there were crates of butter for the warehouse. Nusia always waited for our return in fear. Tulu often took the children for walks — they gathered ćereń [cornelian cherries], from which I made an excellent juice. Otuś fell ill again with pneumonia, but as always he came through it safely. The torment was Julek's illness. Nusia, as they say, "stood on her head" to save him, but the inexorable tuberculosis consumed him. He was a very handsome fellow, he was a teacher, but even before the war his father brought him into the dairy (it was theirs). When the war broke out, Nusia with Julek took over the facility in Zmigród, and Julek's parents remained in Bożęcin. Kazik U. was in Zmigród until his First Communion, and he was the same age as Lila. That idyll did not last long — the front was approaching from the east. The Germans had fits of fury. The Home Army (AK) had its hands full. Almost the entire Żmigród intelligentsia belonged to the AK. By day they worked, at night they went on operations, and by then the Germans were already ordering trenches to be dug. I, on account of the small children was exempted from this. Tulu, as a dairy worker, was too. Some traitor betrayed the AK members. The Gestapo staged a raid on them. The front was already near — a "theater" was

coming to Zmigród, the “actresses” stayed in private homes. One of them stayed with the Brożyns, who belonged to the AK. As a precaution he cut out a little space under the floor to hide in case of a search. The night was sultry, we slept with the window open. Suddenly I hear: “Das Fenster zumachen, aber schnell”. I closed the window and the Gestapo were already pounding on the entry door. Przewłocki opened it for them, and the Germans went straight to us. They shone flashlights, saw Tula in bed, and said, “Gut, gut, der Mann ist zu Hause”, and pulled out a list of the condemned. They asked for Tula’s surname, which, however, did not appear on their list. They searched anyway and told Tulu to get dressed and took him to the Brożyns. Hearing the commotion at our place and in the entry, Brożyna instantly jumped into the little pit that was in the corner of the kitchen. In that spot stood a table covered with a cloth. The Germans slapped the “actress” in the face for not keeping an eye on Brożyna — they were simply raging. They ordered Tulu and Przewłocki to shift a pile of coal in the cellar. They jabbed with bayonets every bundle of straw in the attic. Brożyna vanished, and the house had been under observation since dusk. They took Tula and Przewłocki and ordered them to lead the way to the indicated addresses. Tula knew whom it was about, but he luckily wriggled out of it, saying he was a stranger, that he knew no one, and he led them to a house that wasn’t on the list. They beat Tula and ordered him to go home. Tula came drenched in sweat, because until the last moment he was sure they would kill him. My reaction was an unending scream. The Germans lunged at me and hushed me like a witch — and I surely looked like one, because I was in a black slip and had disheveled hair. The next day they told me that with that screaming I had alarmed the neighboring houses and the suspects had run away. When they took Tula, I was already sure I would never see him again. The Germans took Mrs Brożynowa, and said that if her husband did not report by morning, they would

kill her. Tula and Przewłocki were gone — I was left alone with the children and little Halinka Brożynówna. The Germans told us to leave the light on and kept bursting into the house together with the “actress”. Little Halinka had a cradle fastened to the floor — I had to sit by her and rock her. After some time I heard Brożyna’s voice from the little pit in the kitchen asking me to hand over his clothes, because he was only in his shirt. Brożyna’s clothes lay in the kitchen, but I handed him another set from the wardrobe. Toward dawn Tulu came back — an enormous relief. I told him about Brożyna. In the morning the lamenting family burst in and took Halinka, but I told them nothing about Brożyna. Only when the guards moved away from the house did I pass him breakfast under the table and some cigarettes, and Brożyna fled through the gardens into the forest. Brożynowa and several other hostages were assigned to the front, to the kitchen — after a time they began to badger [to plead with] the soldiers, and so all of them returned home. Then came the assassination attempt on Hitler. The German troops were marching through Zmigród — I stood in the doorway, and the soldiers waved their hands to me and shouted, “Matka! das Krüg ist cu ende” [Mother, the war is over]. Unfortunately for us, it was only then that the “Krüg” began. During that raid they took several people from Zmigród and shot them. The front was approaching—when the houses had already begun to shake from the explosions, that’s when Nusia and I did the most foolish thing. We took the most valuable things, the sick Julek, and the children, and went to Kąty (closer to the Dukla Pass), right on the Wisłoka, in the hope that the front would bypass us, but it was quite the opposite.

Kąty

We arrived in Kąty on a beautiful September day. Sun, fruit on the trees. We set up "camp" with a farmer friend — Wokurka, in a new house at the foot of a hill. Aunt Nusia drove us there and turned back to Zmigród to save and secure belongings. Meanwhile the front immediately drew near and brought Kąty within its range. Some inhabitants took refuge in the forests with their cattle, some in vaulted cellars. We spread kilims on the floor and lay down “like pancakes” on them: sick Julek, his six-year-old daughter Bogna, Tulu, I, Lila, Otuś, and Ania. Our hosts fled to the forest. The house trembles from exploding bullets, plaster falls from the walls and covers us with dust, the room is white with it. Out of the blue the first Soviet soldier enters the house, opens a window, sets up a machine gun in it and begins to fire. I begged him to leave because there are children and a seriously ill man here. It did no good. He advised us to leave the house, but how, Julek was on crutches, little children, and out in the open bullets were whistling thickly. Where to go?! The forest is too far, and we don’t know how far to any cellar. (The cellars were separate, almost completely dug into the ground, only the round roofs stuck up above the earth.) With a heavy heart we leave Julek behind (at his insistent requests), the children put on their little coats, we grab only a suitcase with documents and, literally between bullets, we sneak and run, wanting to reach some cellar. We came upon perhaps two, and no one took us in. Under the little roof of one cellar stood a peasant, who magnanimously advised us that we should shelter beneath the uprooted trees by the Wisłoka. Indeed there are tall trees along the Wisłoka, we run down the steep bank and nestle into a hollow under the roots. Above us, the Bolsheviks, on the opposite bank of the Wisłoka, the Germans. A battle! Bullets splash right at our feet as they fall into the water. At one point a German figure with rifle ready to fire

emerges from beyond the corner of a house on the other side of the Wisłoka. I went numb because he was aiming in our direction. Perhaps he realized we were civilians with children — we stayed alive. We sat under that root cavity almost until dusk. In the meantime Tulu “visited” Julek twice. Although the house had no window panes left, Julek survived. Toward evening we got into the cellar of acquaintances. It was tiny, along one wall stood chests with the hosts’ clothing and linens. We lined the free half with kilims. Two-thirds of the little cellar was a single bed on which sometimes 13–14 people slept side by side. Except for the small children, no one could straighten their legs. Poor, tall, sick Julek! The little cellar, especially at night, shook to its foundations, heavy tanks drove right past the door. If a granade had hit the roof, we would all have been buried. In the morning it was quieter. Then we would leave the little cellar. Nusia and I combed and washed the children. We cooked in the cottage, and, on the sly and in haste, we peeled potatoes and even ground grain on the hand mill. We had fat in the form of rendered butter. Just before the offensive I bought a little piglet, of course it stayed in Zmigród, but our acquaintance Jan Nowak (now a judge) killed it and brought us half to Kąty. We cooked “ein Topf” [all together in one pot], and only Julek ate separately, the rest from one pot. Kąty fell back into German hands. Corpses of soldiers were strewn all over the village. Tulu had to bury them. In the neighboring house there was the so-called “Szreibsztuba” [administrative office], The Germans drove any civilians they caught to build a bridge that Soviet planes were bombing. Tulu was driven there several times. The Germans caught chickens all over Kąty and made me and Nusia pluck them. One time I started cursing, calling the Germans Szwaby and so on. One of them, who was dozing, leaning against the kitchen table, understood Polish, he sprang at me with a revolver — I bolted for the cellar — the German after me, and only when Tulu blocked his way and began to excuse me

did it help, for the German waved it off and left. Among the Germans milling about there were also cultured ones, even with a heart. Am I overdoing it with that “heart”? But the fact remains — one of those Germans almost every day took Ania in his arms, carried her to the storage truck, and gave her either sugar or some canned goods. The front dragged on, to us it felt like ages. We decided to get out of Kąty. But how? The point from which one could leave the front by army vehicle was far away, especially for sick, limping Julek, and then there were the little children and some belongings. Nusia learned that the German on whom our fate depended was celebrating his name day or birthday. She gathered some autumn flowers from neighboring gardens and went to offer good wishes. She returned with a promise that they would get us out of Kąty, only we had to reach the pickup point on our own. On foot this was impossible because Julek was lame, there were small children, and there was baggage. Any means of transport depended on the head of the “Szreibsztube” [administrative office]. It fell to me to procure that wagon. I went to the German and he started making advances — fortunately a front-line soldier came to report, and that saved me. We got the wagon. We loaded it with our belongings, seated sick Julek and little Ania on it. Lila, Otuś, and Bogna clung to the back of the wagon and rode standing. We had not gone far when the Soviets began raking the road with a hurricane of fire. It was hell. We snatched up Ania, helped Julek down in a flash, and took refuge in the nearest cellar. Meanwhile our carter drove the horses on with our belongings to the place where the cars departed. Again, a terrible problem — how to get there with sick Julek and little children. Not far away there was an improvised first-aid post. Nusia and I went there. The head doctor was furious, living essentially on black coffee and cigarettes because he was performing amputations on wounded Germans without a break. Somehow we persuaded someone from the auxiliary staff and

they gave us an ambulance, in which Julek arrived. The children and we went on foot. Our things were piled in an empty barn — another attack. Lila and Otuś were in the barn then, and roof tiles were showering down onto the yard. Naturally we came through that safely too, but as if to fiunish us off, a torrential rain set in, mud up to our ankles, and through that mud we carried our belongings to the truck that was waiting for us. When the children scrambled under the truck's tarp, a puddle literally formed around each of them. Not one of the children, nor even we, so much as sneezed. At last we drove beyond the front line — it felt almost silly in that silence. They delivered us late at night to some locality, and we found ourselves in an empty room with straw and hay on the floor. The Germans who were sitting in the further rooms gave us hot black coffee, and we lay down to sleep side by side. In the morning we set out on the road again. The driver was a bit tipsy and wanted to deliver us right to the house in Turza near Gorlice. In that house lived Julek's brother, a teacher in Turza. Just before the destination this ride nearly ended in tragedy. The road was slippery, clayey, climbing uphill. On the left and right a steep drop, the so-called "paryje" [ravines]. The truck was right on the edge of the precipice when Ania let out a terrible scream and the hapless driver cut the engine. We got out carefully so the truck wouldn't tip over, and partly on foot, partly on the wagon brought by Kazik Kędzior, we reached our destination. Nusia, with Julek and Bogna, moved into a tiny room at Kazik's, and we stayed nearby with a widow.

Stay in Turza.

Aunt Nusia did what she could to get food and nursed her sick husband. We were healthy, but each day was very hard to get through. I bartered leftover rags for food, I went to dig potatoes,

Tulu went to the forest for firewood. Digging was hard work for me. The peasants would gather and take turns doing the digging. Compared to me they were well-fed and strong, and I wanted to acquit myself with honor and kept up with them as best I could. For a day's work I got two meals and a basket of potatoes. The women saw how hard it was for me, and so later they left me in the kitchen, where I cooked a hearty suppers for an average of 15–20 people. Our landlady and her sons were infested with lice, and the lice didn't spare us by either. The village was relatively wealthy, and despite requisition quotas people were not starving. Lila started going to school in Turza. When the teacher asked the children what each had eaten for breakfast — Lila said "dziamę" [porrige/gruel] because that's what the mixture was called there. All the children laughed at Lila. We had no help from anywhere. I felt I wouldn't last long in Turza. One day I went to Nowy Sącz on a reconnaissance. I rode a freight train in the guard's booth with a railwayman, and again there were amorous advances, which I barely wriggled out of. It was the first time in about 10–12 years that I came to Nowy Sącz. I cried and laughed by turns as I walked the streets. I went to our "street". "Our" house stood. I went into "our" apartment, now occupied by strangers. It was something like a "Fata-Morgana" in the desert, an elusive mirage. Then I went to Zawadę near N. Sącz, where to this day relatives of my Father live: the Zarębas and the Kumors told us they would take us in. I don't remember how I got from N. Sącz to Gorlice, from where I walked to Turza (about 10 km). After arriving in Turza I went to the sołtys [village headman] to ask for a cart. He didn't give one. He explained that if we didn't leave they would have to support us, because we had nothing, and we probably wouldn't die of hunger and cold. He didn't give one, and yet most peasants — and Turza is a large village — owned horses. The sołtys magnanimously advised us to go along with the Germans who would come here for hay. We had no other way out, and at the

appointed time we pulled up in our landlady's cart (the cart was pulled by cows) to the sołtys's house. We were there around 11 and left after dark. At the sołtys's the smell of frying scrambled eggs wafted, there was bread and milk on the table, and we set out with only dry bread. The Germans loaded 2 carts with hay "up to the ceiling". On the bottom of one they put our belongings (a kilim, a bit of bedding, photographs, documents, and remnants of clothing). On the second we barely "wystyrmali" [managed to perch] ourselves and rocking set off on our way. The Germans, probably by order, sang the Polish anthem almost the whole way, naturally mangling it badly — they were losing, and so they were becoming "Polish patriots". We arrived in Gorlice around midnight. The Germans unloaded the hay elsewhere, and our "estate" stayed there too. We stayed with the Germans in their quarters. They treated us to hot coffee and bread. In the morning we started looking for a means of transport to Nowy Sącz. The railway was out, because we didn't get a pass. We stood on the road a long time until one German agreed to go fetch the children and our things and take us to Nowy Sącz. We had the last of the vodka and salted pork and promised them to the driver. We arrived in Nowy Sącz — got out at the market square — the German looked at us and didn't take payment. I went to Mrs Doroszukowa at 3 Różana Street. Unfortunately she wasn't at home, her children, locked in, were looking out through the window onto the balcony. While waiting for Mrs Doroszukowa we went down to a shoemaker who had his workshop on the ground floor. Exhausted to the very limit, I told him a few bitter truths about some Poles. That great patriot took offense and didn't even offer us water. Mrs Doroszukowa arrived and fed us with whatever the house could offer, though she herself lived in poverty. We slept one night, and in the morning I went to Zawada, from where I came back with a cart and took the family to our relatives.

Zawada.

We first moved in with the Kumors. It was a childless marriage. They were raising Mietek Fręczek, whose mother — the sister of Mrs Kumorowa — died when Mietek was still a small boy. Kumorowa was a Zarębianka by birth — the daughter of my father's sister. Kumor was an old, conceited man. He treated us like intruders — who were disturbing his peace. They had three rooms, they gave us the smallest little room right next to the kitchen, without a stove. At first we ate together, the fare was very simple, but that was nothing — we liked everything. Worse was that Kumor wanted to get rid of us. On the opposite side of the road lived Józef and Maria Zaręba. Józef too was a son of my Father's sister. They had as many as 9 children. They were relatively well-off because they had 25 morgs of land and a piece of forest, but they had been terribly worn down by the war. They were, however, much more warm-hearted than Kumor, who was also the village major and could really have helped us. The Zarębas whitewashed a room for us, lent us two beds, a trestle table, a bench, and two folding chairs, and again we had our own "home." I tried to procure food as much as possible on my own — Kumor looked down on us. He didn't believe that Tulu had been a professor at the Krzemieniec Lyceum, and I a teacher. Once I baked cookies with saccharin, made tea, and invited Kumor. In the process I showed him our diplomas, the youngest, five-year-old Ania, demonstrated reading the newspaper to him, and we managed to impress Mr major a bit. He arranged for a larger flour allotment for us and wooden clogs for Tulu. Kumorowa gave us 1 litre of wonderful milk (for 5 people). I went down to the cellars for potatoes as if to my own. Christmas was wonderful because there was plenty of bread, there was even a roll, a bit of meat in the form of a hen I had earned. The Christmas tree was decorated with sugar cubes wrapped in tissue paper. I also went to the

name-day celebration of another Zarębianka, Ludmiła. That too was a childless marriage, also “zdebowate” [wooden/stiff], but I ate my fill there of sausage and cake and got tipsy on moonshine. To repay the Zarębas, the kindest of all those relatives, I taught two of their children, Hanka and Józek, to read and write (at present Hanka has finished a vocational tailoring school, married, has a beautiful house and 3 children. Józek is preparing for his master’s exam via part-time studies). Along with teaching the Zarębas, two children of neighbors also came to lessons, and Ania learned too. All this lasted not quite 3 months, because in January 1945 (exactly January 20). Just a few days earlier some German detachment had come to Zawada and brought to the Kumors a whole slaughtered piglet. They didn’t time to to eat i, they had to flee. Kumorowa called me to “dress” it. For the first time in my life I undertook such a job. I took Tulu’s razor and shaved the piglet with it, and then they helped me split it. I got a whole half from the Kumors. I gave a quarter to the Zarębas and a quarter remained for us. It was a splendid feast. Night came, again bullets were whistling across the courtyard like swallows. I had to go to the well for water, a bullet literally flew past my ear. We piled into the cellar with the Zarębas, but we sat there only one night. I couldn’t sit still and kept going out of the cellar and watching the fighting. Zawada up on the hill. Below, Nowy Sącz, the sky was dark navy blue, densely lit by shells. One terrible nightmare — the Germans, were gone. In the morning Bolshevik units entered Zawada. There were swarms of them at the Zarębas’ and the Kumors’. They stole literally out of people’s hands, they raped women. Since I knew the Ukrainian language, I often had to intervene in various matters at the neighbors’. At the Kumors’ the captain himself took up lodging, of which Mr Kumor was extremely proud. They gave him the best room, where there stood a chest of drawers, and in it, locked in a drawer, two gold wedding rings, a gold chain, and a large gold pocket watch. “Mr”

Captain had to march on toward Berlin, but before that he pried open the top of the chest and took “as a keepsake” all the gold. There were countless such thefts. During the fighting the beautiful Nowy Sącz castle was blown up. The castle was blown up on the orders of the Bolshevik troops, entirely needlessly. In my youth various ceremonies were held in the castle courtyard. In the rooms they held exhibitions of paintings by such painters as Reguła, or the excellent portrait painter Barbacki (he died at German hands as a hostage). In the little wood surrounding the castle I gathered Honey fungus and Russulas. The Germans blew up the bridge over the Dunajec river. The end of the bridge along which I had walked with my dad as a child, and later with girlfriends, and with Tulu as my fiancé. I watched from the bank as the Soviets laid a pontoon bridge. The winter was mild, the water high and turbid. A soldier, before my eyes, fell in and drowned, and no one tried to save him. In a short time they “patched” and cobbled together the old bridge, and in that state it had to serve people for a few more years. After it was dismantled, they took the parts to Opole, and there it continues to serve people. Very normal times began for us. Already in January Tulu started teaching. He walked from Zawada on foot, in wooden clogs, often his entire day’s food was a plate of “dziama” [mash/porridge] with milk. Classes were held in various houses all over town, there were also classrooms in the tenement where we had lived before the war. Lila started going to the 6th grade in Zawada, and Otuś to the 2nd. Otuś had a nice navy suit (altered from Tulu’s), and for the protection of these clothes I dressed him in a “szewski” [cobbler’s] apron, until Otuś rebelled and didn’t want to wear the apron to school anymore. In the spring the children spent whole days running around outside. Once Otuś and Ania fell into the manure slurry. In Zawada, too, Ania and Otuś came down with whooping cough. Ania in particular had a hard time with it. I began looking for an apartment in town. It was

extremely difficult. Marysia Korpińska (an old friend of ours from the same street) advised me that in Helena, at Chełmiecka 3, there was a post-Jewish little house where people from Poznań were living, and who were returning to their own parts. I went to the Housing Office and they assigned it to us. Unfortunately, in the meantime Mrs Sekułowa quickly moved into it with her three sons and wouldn't budge. I asked at the magistrate's to be assigned some other apartment, but they said they would file a complaint against that lady and she would have to move out. The matter went to court and Mrs Sekułowa received an eviction order. (She had a sister on the same street, Mrs Cieślowa, and her place had an apartment) but that didn't help, and Tulu had to walk kilometers from Zawada every day. I had a "brilliant" idea. I loaded our belongings onto a cart and we moved into half the little house through the window (the house had three little rooms and a kitchen). Only then did Mrs Sekułowa move into her sister's apartment, and later to a fine apartment in the municipality.

Chełmiecka 3.

It was a little house made up of 3 small rooms, a kitchen, and a large veranda. It also had a patch of garden. Tulu taught — I, out of necessity, only ran the household — because the teaching post they offered me was far out in the countryside, they wouldn't give me one in Nowy Sącz. It was hard in every respect, financially and for lack of any comforts. Water was far away, lighting was kerosene. In the flat the "furniture" consisted of two beds from Zawada (each different); I borrowed [another] simple wooden bed from an old schoolmate and that was the "bedroom," the iron one stood in the other little room. There was trouble with filling the mattresses because you had to go all the way to Zawada for straw. The "etagères" [shelving] were made from UNRRA boxes

(these were packages sent by the USA for the starving population), precisely “United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration,” an international organization set up in the USA in 1943 under the banner of providing economic aid to the peoples of countries destroyed by war, dissolved in 1947. Curtains hung on strings. The other room had an iron bed, a huge table from the Jesuits’ boarding school, and chairs that the students had carried in for us, along with two nightstands. Tulu somehow got hold at school of a huge wardrobe, which served us both as a clothes wardrobe and partly as a pantry. We whitewashed the flat ourselves (later every year Hania came from Zawada, or Józia kulawa’s [lame] mother — Mrs Przybyłowa). The garden with two apple trees was important, I bought about 2 bushes of “smorodyn” [currants]. I was very happy with that garden and put a lot of work into it. Tulu earned little. I walked to Zawada for potatoes. They never delivered even a measure [bucket/scoop], perhaps later when we were ordering 3–6 m. for winter and 2–3 kopy of cabbage [kopa = 60 heads]. I dug those potatoes myself for free and naturally loaded myself with them like a horse — a backpack completely full and two bags — and walked 6 km one way with that. Often I literally had nothing to give the children for supper, and then I remember during the long June days we simply went to bed. I gave private lessons. Various mothers also came asking for a recommendation from Tulu. They wanted to give something — I made excuses but inwardly I begged God that they would insist and leave the gift. Food queues were like a continuation of the war, a plague. They would allot 1 kg, sometimes even only ½ kg of sugar or flour, and you’d stand for hours in a queue for that! The children didn’t want to stand. I was often shoved out of the line — I had to argue, and our children were cross with me because of it. When they started rationing food it was a bit better, but there was too little of it to avoid standing in queues altogether. Clothing was a nightmare. Marysia

Korpińska worked with American relief and about 3 times she brought a few little clothes in a handbag. Sometimes Aunt Hela (she worked in Kudowa, and her eldest son Kazik attended our high school, and later all three boys were with us) sent some German cast-off “rags”, and that’s how we managed, but step by step it got a little better. We went with the children to Kudowa to Hela’s about twice. Compared to us she had a lovely flat, and we didn’t want to go back from her place to our junk. I very often had headaches, in general, in the afternoons I felt like “peas by the path” [utterly spent/wilted]. Otuś probably worried about it the most and sometimes late at night brought me headache powders from the neighbors. These were probably all aftereffects of wartime experiences and hard work. When the gate creaked, I would freeze with fright. The displaced doctor Isterewicz told me to lie flat on my stomach, measure my pulse, and take some medicines. That whole “affair” was before the Easter holidays, I then directed the children from my bed — Lila kneaded and baked the cake. I rested — I got through it, and often it seemed to me afterward that there was no job I couldn’t manage. And there was plenty of work, because already on Chełmiecka Street almost without interruption, besides our own children, we initially had Hela’s 2 boys and later three. Naturally, no washing machine, no water, no light. To somehow make ends meet I leased a piece of field from Mrs Bastowa — our milkwoman. The stay was enlivened by Hela’s visits — first with the children and later to the children. I remember for one holiday I started early on putting aside flour and sugar and then baked cakes from 30 kg of flour. It wasn’t much at all for six children. Iwonka was only born on 30 Oct 1948. For the girls, or rather for Lila, I sewed coats out of blankets. One Christmas Eve supper was with borscht with soap. In winter we ran the kitchen in one room. A makeshift iron stove, one table with the children crowded around it, a kerosene lamp, dark. I hastily set the ladle down on a bar of soap, which stuck to

it and fell into the borscht. We always had a lot of fish for the holidays — it was the cheapest “dunajcówka” [fish from the Dunajec river]. For Christmas Eve we sat on the bench, on the bed, on two chairs, on crates. Tulu would take out several of his little tweezers for removing fish bones. There was always kutia and apple strudel.

The children helped me a lot—there were weekly duty shifts, the older ones also had to carry water, light the stove, sweep, and run errands.

30 Oct 1948, Iwonka was born. Maybe it was a reaction after the war, or maybe self-defense against approaching old age, suffice to say that I was very happy about Iwonka’s birth. I looked up her names in the calendar. The whole family knew we were going to have a child. The christening was solemn. The godmother was Hela and the godfather Olek — my siblings. The children went to school, went away for the holidays, I stayed by myself. The aunts found her the name “Iwonka,” and that’s what we called her and still do. Only when enrolling her in school did I learn what name Tulu had really given her: Urszula – Elżbieta. That was Tulu’s beloved “Koszulka,” as Tulu called her. Before Iwonka’s birth we often went together to the Chełmiec forest, or to Klimkówka — to the forests of my youth. I’m extremely fond of orchids, and when I saw them for the first time after the war in the Sącz forest, I literally shouted for joy. We went to Rytro, Głębokie. These too are places I used to go to as a child. It was hard, there was a great deal of work, but the house was pleasant, the little street quiet. We kept dogs, first there was “Ksenia.” The children were on their way to that library and burst into the house screaming that Ksenia was dead. They cried terribly — a Soviet car had run her over. The second dog was a splendid German Shepherd — Reks. He went bathing with us, went on walks. The end of the idyll came when our house was bought by Mr Jurkowski, a hairdresser. Some Jew,

a successor, turned up and sold the house. From that moment on Jurkowski kept visiting us. He picked apples, piled junk in the yard. He was fixed the roof, and finally he put poison out for the dog. We tried to save him. We took him to the vet, gave him milk to drink, and the dog recovered. But not for long, because when he dosed him a second time, nothing helped. That Jurkowski was worse than a brute. Then he started pestering us to swap houses with him. He tormented us so much that we finally decided to do it. We gave him a well-tended garden, a clean house, and he gave us a bedbug-infested house, and a terrible yard, because Jurkowski kept pigs and a cow. The yard was nothing but a manure heap. Working in the garden simply carried me away. We filled in the manure pit and dug over the whole yard and the garden in front of the house. At first we had all the vegetables we needed in abundance, later there was less because the sycamore maple and the big apple trees grew and shaded part of the garden. There were so many flowers that when there wasn't money for bread Olek and Alek went to the market and sold them. Even so, the financial situation was hard, and so I bought small piglets, raised them .... in the .... cellar, and after some time called the butcher. Kazik and Lila were already at university. When the piglet got turned into blood sausage and kełbasa, both we and the children in Kraków had something to eat. Just when Iwonka was 6, we let ourselves be tempted to again get a dog. It was a small German Shepherd pup, like a little ball. He grew up together with the children, he was their favorite, and Iwonka in particular doted on him. Tragedy befell him in our present house. They poisoned him. I went on an outing with Tulu, and Iwonka was alone at home, she took it terribly hard. I don't want any dog or cat anymore. Szaruś [Grayie], that little cat from Krzemieniec also died of poison. In general the Sącz people are mean — they threw us out of food queues and threw us out of two houses, poisoned

our dogs, cut down that lovely little tree we had planted, covered the flowers with sand.

Hela moved in with us for good, with her furniture — I threw out those cobbled-together odds and ends and then it was so-so at home, but the crowding was terrible, in the first year in Helena [a district of Nowy Sącz] there were 10 of us. In summer it was half bearable because the little room in the attic saved us, but winter was awful. On top of that, chronic lack of money, because Hela initially worked as a housekeeper in a boarding school and earned very little. Tulu taught from morning till night (at times over 60 hours a week), but it was still too little, especially when autumn came and we had to stock up with fuel, potatoes, cabbage, shoes and coats for the children. Usually, when I went to town over the bridge, I cried, or prayed to find some money or for someone from America to send us some. Lila and Kazek were already at university, Olek was finishing high school, Radek and Ania were catching up to him. I leased a field from Mrs Bastowa for potatoes, and once I even sowed wheat, but I had an awful lot of trouble with it. Hela and I washed and dyed old clothes and reworked them into new ones. Finally we hit on an idea and started embroidering blouses, dresses, collars. Tulu helped us with this, because he drew new patterns and transferred them. Lila had her part in it too. Sometimes we embroidered all night long. So as not to fall asleep, in summer we embroidered with the window open and, in the process, listened to the nightingales.

At last Hela moved into her own apartment, which she had obtained with great difficulty. She took part of the furniture, and then we bought on installments a light-colored dining-room set. I was terribly happy with it. Hela left the piano but only temporarily — Iwonka played it, and Ania a little, and even Lila when she came to Poland from England. But time came for the piano as well — because Kazek Unold took it away. I felt sad, because

since childhood my dream had been a piano. Violins wear me out when someone “saws” them. I like a violin orchestra. I love the piano immensely but just can’t stand banging on the keys. I stood on my head and bought an old piano for 11,000 zł. That piano just stands there, because Iwonka is away from home, and when she comes she plays very little. Lila isn’t here. Nor is Otuś. Ania is far away. Iwonka is to take the piano for herself. Such was our luck—our lot, that we could never settle anywhere for long, and we had to leave the little house in Helena. That little house was cracked, the crack was visible clear through, but Borus had his kennel there, and there were those few garden beds. Our landlord sold the little house to Miss Wróblówna. She bought it very cheaply and began to harass us to move out. We submitted an application to the housing office, we didn’t want a private house, besides where to? The Housing commissions said we had sufficient square meters. We wrote piles of applications — in vain, and meanwhile Ms Wróblówna first cut down that pretty maple I had planted, then covered the little garden flowers with sand, tore up a piece of ceiling in the basement rooms, so that the floor in the room next to the kitchen lay only on joists for several winters. On top of that the stoves smoked, I swept out the soot twice a year. It was so cold in winter that the water in the kitchen constantly froze. What were we to do?! Renovate? With what? For whom? When Lila came with little Romuś (the second time), Miss Wróblówna had a pit dug next to the house supposedly to check the state of the foundations — we were afraid Romuś would fall into it. After Lila left, I hit upon the idea of not whitewashing the house, not stuffing the cracks with plaster but with cotton wool. It looked awful. With difficulty I called in the sanitary commission in winter, and they found the conditions inhuman, but again the regular housing commission ruled that all these “deficiencies” were removable. “Round and round we went”. This wrangling absolutely disgusted me!! Miss Wróblówna was obliged to give

us housing, but she was, in every sense of the word a PIG. That wealthy, solitary woman. When they finally assigned us a flat, she didn't want to give a penny for the deposit (6,000 zł), for the move, or for the apple trees planted by us. We got deeply into debt then, both to the ZNP and to ORS (Installment Sale Service). If not for Tulu's pupil—Furtek, there would also have been the costs of the move. There was a big problem with piles of books, newspapers, and other clutter that Tulu by no means wanted to part with, and the flat had an area of 46 square metres + a small cellar. I hit on an idea and, with my own money and the management's consent, fenced off the storage under the stairs — now we have two little cellars. Into one we crammed piles of books and newspapers, the other serves as a handy storeroom. Who and when will make use of those newspapers and old books? Water, a bathroom, and radiators are a wonderful thing, but the surroundings are dreadful — a kolkhoz. Our block is right in the very middle. There's no balcony — you can't go even an hour without curtains in the evening and, by day without sheer curtains. Smoke from the boiler room pours between the blocks as if through a chimney. Trampled lawns, children screaming. In the little house in Helena, when I embroidered at night with the window open, I heard nightingales singing. I long for greenery, for a little bed, and in addition it wears me down that Tulu feels very bad, especially in winter when the boiler rooms are firing and because of Biegonice. What a terrible mistake, an irreparable loss, those Biegonice. They built a factory of cathode electrodes there (about 4 km from Nowy Sącz). The beautiful Sącz land, smoked over, gassed. They excuse themselves that the main motive was to relieve unemployment, and what turned out?! Fewer than 2,000 people were employed. Unemployment still exists. They "displaced" hundreds of farmers, and the land is fertile, beautiful. If instead of that factory they had built, for example, a vacation–tourist complex, how much greater the benefit would have been. I would

blow that factory up. In the flat the flowers don't want to grow. Besides, our girls claim that potted plants heat a flat up. Personally, I would throw out half the junk and put up metal trellises, partition the flat, and hang everything with flowers. I must get flower boxes, to have flowers at least in summer. And how did poor Borus feel! But at least the dog had us. We went out with him for walks. I don't want to describe how he died! Why don't people understand that people can love a dog, a cat! Besides, these are Sącz people! I'm ashamed I was born here. I have the impression that since they threw us out of houses and poisoned the animals, they'd poison us too to have more room for themselves. Before we moved in here, for nearly two months I went every day and painted and cleaned the flat. Now I keep moving the furniture around, because I want to bring a little variety into the prison. They're going to install gas — and new expenses. Now, as I'm copying this for Lila, the gas is already in and cost about 10,000 zł. It's convenient, but getting it installed cost an enormous amount of health and energy, because the workmen botch things, drink, and demand bribes.

I haven't written anything about the floods in Helena. We went through one flood on Chełmiecka. The water flooded the street, the garden, but only reached up to the threshold. I took the children and went to a relative on "Paścia Góra." That relative (he's no longer alive) was a forester. From there we watched the flood, there we ate wonderful venison (I prefer not to think of the shot little doe). We lived through two floods and several flood warnings in our second house, and since the house had basement rooms, they were always flooded nearly up to the ceilings. During one flood Ania didn't manage to leave for her work placement, because the water tore up the railway lines, and she came back home with a suitcase on her shoulder, wading through the little street nearly waist-deep in water. The boys rode

in a bathtub and a washtub along the street. When the water receded, we had to carry tons of silt out of the basement rooms. With us it still wasn't so terribly bad. From the railway track I saw houses over the Dunajec flooded with roaring, murky water up to the roofs. Soldiers were taking people out on pontoons. They waited to return to their homes at the municipal office building which stood by the main road (now there are private flats there). The Lupów family also settled in with us. When it rained for several days in a row, that was already an alarm. We brought from downstairs a supply of coal, carried all the firewood upstairs. We hauled in drinking water from the well, I bought bread and sugar, potatoes, and we waited for the flood. We went out in raincoats to watch the water rising on the Dunajec. In the house it was damp and "moody". Iwonka was very afraid and all night kept asking how much the water had fallen, and it was exactly the opposite — the water was rising. Here there are no floods, but there is almost every day a flood of smoke.

People of Sącz.

There's a tale that in former times, when the people of Sącz appealed to the people of Stary Sącz (a little town 7 km from Sącz) to borrow a gallows, they were refused, saying they needed it for themselves and their children. That is, in general, the mentality of the people here. Right after the war I reported to the inspectorate asking for a job in Nowy Sącz. I was refused and offered one in the countryside. Tulu taught at the liceum, the children went to the liceum, there was no public transport. The roads were awful. To live in a village with young children and run two households?! So I had to give up and we had to live on just Tulu's meager salary. In Sącz only insiders worked. Tulu probably wouldn't have gotten a job either, but he had already started in

January 1946, and there was a lack of people with higher education.

Only thanks to strong patronage (our neighbor Janas was an inspector) did I get in 1958, a job in Biczyce. It was a contract. Buses already ran, besides, whenever I could I commuted by bicycle. My zeal knew no bounds. I had longed for this work for years. I also studied on my own, because during the years of “unemployment” I had forgotten many things amid the menial chores. In Biczyce I put on plays, trips. I had good results and that may have contributed to my getting a job in Chełmiec, and this time a permanent post. In Chełmiec it was drudgery! Every year I painted benches, doors, windows, laid out little gardens. I bought aquariums and teaching aids, especially for history, with my own money. I staged performances (for one performance the sets and costume designs were made for me by Lila, who happened to have arrived then from England). That performance even ended up in the press. At the performance — or rather a staging of the poetry of M. Konopnicka, old people cried, even the teachers. I read Pan Tadeusz and Sienkiewicz to the children “from cover to cover”, and finally I was building a school. A school had to be built there sooner or later, but it was mainly my efforts that brought the construction forward by a good few years. The conditions there were terrible. The children were crammed into a former C. K. Austrian building at a crossroads. When cars passed, the ceilings shook, until one day there was a failure and one ceiling threatened to collapse completely. The large classrooms upstairs and two on the ground floor were taken out of service. To get any additional rooms it was necessary to organize a march with the children to the Presidium of the County National Council. I argued, I was the initiator. They rushed over from the [Communist] Party and finally gave us keys to an old three-room granary. One classroom had only one window. The

children were going blind. I took photos of those “facilities,” and having faithfully described the conditions (the meeting with the authorities took place in the evening in Remiza, so no one would have bothered to come to the school anyway). I backed up my words with the photos, which I handed to the authorities. A pity I didn’t keep any as a memento. After that meeting, a School Construction Committee was formed, and I myself put forward my candidacy for secretary. The whole family helped me in drafting various letters. Otuś helped me a great deal, by virtue of serving as an officer in the spatial planning department he knew the plans for the expansion of Chełmiec, etc. There were many opponents of building the new school, the various intrigues and obstacles couldn’t be listed on an oxhide [i.e., innumerable], but at last the construction of the school was approved, and that same year they began laying the foundations. Within a year a beautiful 12-room school was built. I however was so disgusted with those people that I moved to Nowy Sącz. I got a job at Szkoła Podstawowa Nr 13 – Cwiczeń [primary teacher-training school]. It is a promotion, but there is also an enormous amount of work and very poor facilities.

Since I am already on this subject, I will add my transition to retirement. It was not, despite my 64 years, voluntary. They forced me out, because I felt fine and the teaching profession is my life’s passion. Anticipating that they would dismiss me I submitted an application to the inspectorate and the kuratorium [Regional Board of Education] asking to keep me employed. Nothing helped. I am copying here my application:

Kuratorium School District
of Kraków in Kraków.

On 29 May 1972 I received from the Department of Education in Nowy Sącz a letter notifying me of my transfer to retirement.
I hereby lodge an appeal against this decision for the following reasons:

I began copying that application and gave up. Nothing doing! They dismissed me, period. Just one more thing on this subject. When I was defending myself like a lion against being forced into retirement, one of the teachers said to me, “It’s hard, but age comes and you have to go. Railway workers, as soon as they turn 60, must leave without exception”. I was outraged at such a comparison and said that if a writer hits 60 then he mustn’t write, a poet create, a painter paint.

I at least managed to win this much, that despite a relatively short period of only 21 years of work I was receiving a pension not much smaller than Tulu’s. Tulu has 2,420 zł — I 2,379 zł. Maybe now I will still manage to devote time not so much to the children but at least to the grandchildren! The children and I! Lila was 6, Otuś only 2 when the war started. Ania was born at the beginning of the war, Iwonka a short time after the war, and all my effort was directed above all not so much at bringing them up but at keeping them alive. When the situation finally began to improve, the children had essentially already grown up and started leaving home one after another. I had no time to raise them in any organized, deliberate way, besides, the children seemed such a part of me, simply my whole self that I often caught myself feeling as if they had been with me since my earliest years, that they feel and think just as I do. My father inscribed for me in such a book —

a diary for example: “Who gets up early, the Lord grants good things”, “By truthfulness you will make your way through the world”, “Love of the Homeland and honor are the most important good,” and so on. I read Rodziewiczówna, Kraszewski, Sienkiewicz, Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Konopnicka. The ideals of those writers became my ideals. I was foolish and I am foolish, though “honest,” as they say. I have written about many things that happened already after the war, but those are, well, the consequences of the war.

I would still like to write a lot about the children, about their youthful years, about their studies and life as adults. The one thing that cannot be changed is that their worries, their life, arouse in me a constant anxiety, they often rob me of sleep. Even though many things make me happy, even though I would like at least to embroider some pretty things, because that’s really all I can do (I can’t play, I can’t paint), in the end I would rather die already, so as to stop forever fearing and worrying about the children.

[An erased, almost illegible lament about children]

We took … a garden plot to somehow keep going. Our children are good, but a bit aloof and they don't even like being looked at, and as for touching them — God forbid. You can't say anything heartfelt either. I walk around like a fool and pretend I am indifferent to them, that everything is in order. What I am writing now will also be criticized and poorly received. Lila once told me that in England, in the West in general, as soon as children grow up a bit they drift apart from their parents and hardly take any interest in one another. Can it really be like that? I know that more than once I made mistakes in our mutual relations, but I never did

anything deliberately bad. I don't know — maybe Otuś won't concern himself too much with his children, but I don't know whether it will be a matter of indifference to Lila how Romuś is arranging his life. I know, Liluś, that you travel not only thousands of km to be in Poland, but also to see us. Forgive me that sometimes in anger I blurted out something foolish. I regretted every bad word and I still do. I regret that I watch television when you are here. I do it deliberately, so that it’s as if nothing mattered when you will soon be leaving. And again I would like to sleep through this time so as not to fear a mishap during your journey.

Tato [Dad] has it a thousand times better, because though he’s supposedly a fatalist, he’s a thousand times more of an optimist than I am. When you were little, Lilusiu, and the doctor diagnosed enlarged hilar glands [lymph nodes] in you, as soon as I walked out onto the street I cried out of fear for you. That’s me — a real scaredy-cat. I know that for you, Lilu, every trip to Poland is bound up with disappointment. When one longs, one idealizes everything, and here we both, Tato and I, are getting older, and with age we acquire many different habits, faults, unpleasant changes in appearance and in how we move. Well then, youth has its rights, and old age can't have any?

At the end I wrote a bit of "nonsense", and that's mainly why I dawdled about handing over this "diary," and I felt like cutting out the last pages, but here you have it Lilu.

Mama.

7 Oct 1973 — Warsaw.