

301/3617

Andrzej Krauthamer b.[orn] in Warsaw on November 1, 1935

Father's name: Karol Krauthamer – an attorney

Mother's name: Felicja Rapaport – a beautician

Place of residence:

a. before the occupation: Warsaw, 1 Przejazd Street

b. during the occupation: 76 Al.[eje] Jerozolimskie

later: the Warsaw ghetto, 2 Leszno Street

Warsaw: the Aryan side

c. at present: Łódź, 56 Piotrkowska Street, apt. 8

He did not have any siblings, he was an only child.

At present he attends school number 68 – the 6th form

He reads and writes in Polish, English and a little in French (he learnt it himself).

Rec[orded by] G.[enia] Silkes

The child's profile

A big boy with an open smiling face, with black eyes and black hair. Very gifted, intelligent and well-read. His intellectual level is many years ahead of his physiological development. He is talented and shows great writing and musical skills. He creates, composes and performs his own musical pieces. Very warm, good and childlike, and at the same time very reasonable, tolerant and serious. Extremely attached to his grandmother, the only person who he survived the occupation with and to whom he is very attached. He is very absent-minded, nervous and impatient. He reads too much and associates too much with adults, which has a negative influence on his personality.

The child relates

When the war broke out and Warsaw was bombarded, I couldn't understand what it was all about. I thought it was the devil. But because I was surrounded by my whole family, I just hooted at this devil. My hoots were perhaps quieter than the bombs, but they were also more derisive. And suddenly we heard a crash. It got darker: smoke and dust filled the hall. I started shouting so loudly as if I wanted to compete with the crash and the rumble around. Our neighbour was dripping blood. I started screaming again, but something fell on my head and scared me and I ran away. My cousin Józek cried: „The gas, the gas! I'm being

poisoned!” Then he started running away but was hit by some stone or brick and passed out. I cried: “Józek, wake up! We must go!” Granny cried: “Grandpa, Mania, help!” Zosia: “I knew it!” And our parrot cried: “Stupid, stupid!” And I said to her: “*You’re* stupid!” (And I don’t remember more.) A bomb hit the courtyard and demolished the house around and that’s how we got out, since the gate was knocked down. Something hit the parrot, it cried “Ra, ra!” and it turned out it was dead. But the canary and the starling survived. Józek was seriously ill. He had a high temperature. We had nothing to eat. There were eleven of us: Granny, Mania, Grandpa, Józek with mother, Zosia, Rzyket, Małgosia, Zosia number 2, Rommy, his wife, me. Józka was carried by Małgosia and Zosia number 2. The birds were hungry. I didn’t want to eat, I had half a roll which I gave to them. Mom gave me – not a roll [but a smack] - for it (but why??). We lived at Grandpa’s at 1 Przejazd [Street]. I didn’t know what was up and thought that it was all done by a witch. And then everything was normal. I don’t remember anything else from that time.

I was in the country at Walercia’s and ate noodles. Once I was beaten by peasants’ children for being a Jew. Walercia gave them something very unpleasant for it – a hit with a brush. I had two friends: Anusia and Romcia. There were forget-me-nots there. One time I almost fell into a well. Anusia said: “Get into the bucket and I’ll lower you into the well!” I did it. She lowered it too early and I felt that there’s nothing for me to stand on. Anusia lowered it because she made a mistake, and I fell further down, but my sleeve got caught in the bucket. Moving lower and lower I managed to get into the bucket. When I got out, I was drenched and had bronchitis. I was ill for a week, maybe more. And then I went in a wagon to a nearby village. There was a hotel or a guesthouse there, and Mom and my stepfather. Then we went to Warsaw. We lived in an old flat (7 rooms). Józek lived next door. Because of his carelessness Józek burnt a wardrobe. Then we had to move to Granny to 1 Przejazd Street. Mom told me that there, at Granny’s, there were a lot of children and that it’d be very funny. First I lived at Granny’s and then with Mom at Tłomackie [Street]. There was a square there and I played with children. Then it was cut off. Grandpa died of consumption, which developed out of flu. Mom moved in with us. Józek with mother and uncle Maurycy were taken from the Aryan side by the Germans. Granny went out to obtain papers for us.

I was playing with Dziunia Żelichowska in the square when a van with Huns came. The Huns got off the van and went to a nearby restaurant. They left it dead drunk. Dziunia ran away; I - the younger - stood by Granny. One of them caught a young Jew by the collar, turned him round and slapped him with his right [hand] on the face. The youngster’s cap fell off his head, and a thin stream of blood trickled from his nose. The German slapped him

again. He let the collar go, the Jew lost his balance and fell down. Did he pass out? I don't know. Then the German kicked him very hard with his heavy boot on the right side and the body rolled to a gutter. I thought it'd finish here. But no! The German lifted his leg and with a stamp crushed his face against the spring mud. A few more times the leg of the monster was lifted and then lowered onto the head, the belly, the legs. A nightmare. When me and Granny recovered from the numbness in which we watched that macabre scene, there was no one in the square. The van had gone. And there was a tangle of blood and meat in the gutter.

When the ghetto was established we had to move from our house to Granny's place on 1 Przejazd Street to a six-room flat. My Granny had a cosmetics factory and Mom had a shop. One day we stood for a long time during a blockade. Opposite us there were masses of Jews. One of the Germans pulled one small Jew. There was nobody to stand up for him. He [had] tripped the Hun up. The latter fell. The boy leaned over him and knocked him on the nose with his fist. Is it over?, I asked Mom. Yes, she said. I looked up. The boy was lying in a pool of blood. But one could tell that he had fought bravely, because the Hun was dripping blood in all directions.

When we moved in with Granny there was also my stepfather with us. It was still before the war that Mom divorced her first husband, my father, and married a dentist, Albert Rozenbaum – my stepfather. In the ghetto my stepfather became a Jewish policeman. I saw with my own eyes that he beat Jews. He broke the arm of one Jew. He beat a Jewish beggar woman because she was sitting on a step. She answered: none of your business. Look at him, how great he's become! I didn't like him. I was very small and stuck out my tongue at him (that's what Mom told me later). When he became a policeman and started beating Jews, Mom started hating him. She quarrelled with him, but we lived together. My stepfather's name was Albert Rozenbaum. At that time Granny went to the Aryan side to obtain papers for all of us. After a month Mom sent me off to Granny. It was on August 7, 1942. She and her husband didn't manage to get out and I never saw them again.

I lived in the country at Chylice as Andzie Bonguard from Paryż. The reason for that was my look. I didn't know what a Jew (?) was. As a result, the following dialogue ensued between me and the village children:

'Are you a Jew?'

'But what's a Jew?'

'It's Mosiek'^a

^a *Mosiek*, also *Mosie* – a pejorative term for a Jew (a diminutive of the name Moses)

‘And what’s Mosiek?’

‘It’s you!’

‘It’s me?’

‘Mosie!’

‘Really? I’ll go and ask Granny if Mosiek is me?’

I repeated everything to Granny.

Or:

‘Are you from the ghetto?’

‘From the *what?*’ I asked in a naïve voice

‘From the ghetto.’

‘What town is that?’

‘You know very well!’

‘What! You don’t want to tell me? I’ll tell Granny!’

‘Wait a moment. Don’t go! It’s such a town where only Jews live.’

‘You, Mosie, where’re your balls?’

‘Show me your balls!’

‘Wait a moment. Must go and fetch them (and the end was the same)’

But then it stopped being a game. A woman asked me: are you a Jew? And I said to her: I was born in Paris, and my Granny was born in Łomża. My name is Andzie Robert Bonguard, and so on. But all these personal data that I knew by heart did nobody any good. On the contrary. We had to run away. We went by train to Warsaw. On one of the stations there was a search. My eyes and those of a Nazi met. And I stared in his with my black Jewish eyes. Staring like that, I revenged the youngster who lay in the gutter, the boy who went on a wild-goose chase and lay defeated in the *Umschlagplatz*, the victims of hunger, tuberculosis, and typhus, the corpses I had seen in the streets. I took revenge for Treblinka, Majdanek, Auschwitz, for the gas chambers, and crematories and Pawiak, for my mother, for the whole Jewish nation. I said with these eyes: I may die, but you’ll also die, you rotter. Will he kill me or not? But actually I was not scared at all. He took my mother. What else could he do to me? Kill me? Ha-ha! I’m sure the other world is better than this! And in fact – I thought – if he kills me, he’ll remember my stare till he dies. What was in this stare? Anger? No. Hate? I’m not sure. It’s only now that I really hate them. So what was it? Revenge... What does it mean? He knew, he could feel my stare, he understood... And then, for the first time in my life, I saw an expression of pity on a German’s face. Oh, what hypocrisy! He produced a candy from his pocket and gave it to me. I spurned his hand. He grinned cynically, put the candy back into his pocket and

went away. And only then I nestled against my Granny with tears in my eyes, as if I feared that they could take her away from me.

In Warsaw I and Granny lived at 39 Złota Street at an old hysterical woman's (a mentally ill thief Waszczenkowa). We were very uncomfortable there, because I and Granny slept on a very narrow sofa, and Granny is at least two metres large around her waist. Waszczenkowa stole my leather jacket with polecat-ferret collar, and a ring, and sent them to her son Karolek who was kept in German captivity. We found out about it when a telegram from Karolek came when Waszczenkowa was not at home. Granny opened the envelope and read what was there: Thank you for the polecat-ferret jacket and the ring. I'll be back soon. Signed by Karol. Granny always said that she suspected Waszczenkowa was a thief. One day Waszczenkowa went for a walk with me and met an acquaintance who asked: "Where're you taking this Jewish brat?" Waszczenkowa told my Granny about it and added that she expected a search as that acquaintance had already denounced a lot of Jews. After this conversation with Waszczenkowa Granny went out. She left me at Aunt Irka's (Rega) and went somewhere, I don't know where. Then she came back to Waszczenkowa's place and met there a Polish policeman and Kobzowa, an old servant of Waszczenkowa. Granny gave the policeman a bribe (I don't know how much). The policeman went away. Granny quickly took our things and without waiting for Waszczenkowa's return we quickly left the place. Granny went to a new place where she stayed. At that time I was at Irenka's on Świętojerska Street (I don't remember the number. I was led in when it was dark, and I never went out of this place.) There were nine of us living in one middle-sized room. Among others there was Zosia, Granny's close friend. As to Granny, she wandered from place to place, she didn't have a steady address. She earned her money where she could. She paid the Marciniaks three thousand (3000) zloties a month, and she brought my food herself. But the Marciniaks usually ate all that food, even in my presence. Later Granny became more clever and brought me a parcel every day instead of bringing it once a week, since the weekly parcel had been gone after one day anyway. One day the caretaker of the house came. I was sitting in the corner and reading a book that Zosia had obtained, and I didn't understand a word of that book. The caretaker approached me, told me to read a bit aloud (he himself was illiterate). And then he turned to Zosia and said: Is this your "gudłaj" (this is how Poles called the Jews)? Yes, my little son. He nodded: Aha!, and went away. The next day I was already at Międzylesie, at the Grzelaks.

The first week at their place was pretty pleasant. Nobody could suspect that that was where my gehenna would begin. The Grzelaks had a neighbour who hated Granny and me.

Already at the beginning she carried on a nasty intrigue. She told Granny that she'd been to Warsaw and that I'd been shot. The result was that I didn't see Granny for a whole month. Meanwhile, Mrs Grzelak with that horrid hag hatched a plot and put me in a cell which was in the cellar. I stayed there for a long time. I ate very little. The air was horrible. When after a month my broken-hearted Granny came to fetch my things and when I heard her voice, I cried so loud as if I wanted to wake up the dead. Mrs Grzelak fumed with fury. She said if I went on crying like that the Germans would come and kill me, Granny and her whole family. She didn't want to keep me any longer, unless I stay in the cellar. Being desperate, Granny agreed. The Grzelaks gave her another condition – a surgery. All this was very good because it happened they had no ether so the whole surgery was carried out without anaesthesia. To make matters worse, I couldn't cry, so I bit my lips as hard as I could. After the surgery the doctor said I passed my exam. But the surgery was not successful. It had to be repeated and after that I went to the country with a man called Adam, whose surname I don't remember. I went to the village of Brzeście, where he was a village teacher. He was as black as me, so he made me his nephew. His black look led to the following adventure. We were standing with Granny at a tram stop when a man started looking Adam in the eyes. We were going to Służewiec where we were to part with Granny and go to Brzeście by train. Adam said:

'Why are you looking at me like that?'

'Because your hair's so black.'

'What, you do not like it, do you?' Adam said with emphasis.

'I certainly don't.'

We got on a tram. But there were people all around who blocked Adam's way.

Then Adam said to Granny:

'I'll pretend that I run away, and you'll pretend you don't know me. They'll run after me and will get a good hiding. He jumped off the tram which was running, and started escaping. Two men flanked him. And he took them by the collar and led them to a policeman. He showed his papers, admitted that he only simulated an escape to play a prank on them, and then entered a gate and gave these two a good hiding. The policeman beat them on his own part and put them in jail.

But I only spent a few days at Brzeście. People recognised me there and I had to come back to the Grzelaks. I had my third [surgery] there. But all in vain. A week later I went to Kozłowice near Żyrardów. I had a feeling it was a passage from hell to paradise. I was free, could wander, run, bake potatoes with shepherd boys in the field, pick mushrooms, go to the cinema, play different games with children. The food was wholesome and tasty, the milk

straight from the cow. The Adameks family were very kind to me, and I must admit I abused their kindness a bit. I was not always a good boy. I obeyed them unwillingly and went far far into the forest, I played with boys I didn't know. I just wanted to make up for all that time in the cellar. Granny came to me from Warsaw only once a week, on Sundays. I had nothing to read, I read one and the same Bible a thousand times over and over again. And I also taught the old Adamiaks to read and write using a spelling book. (It's such an uncanny coincidence: where I was unhappy the houses are burnt and the people homeless and gone; the Grzelaks are in Łódź and they are very poor. The Adameks, on the other hand, are in good health and happy, because they help people.)

And then two small boys from a *Volksdeutsche* family tricked me into telling them part of the truth. They taught me anti-Nazi songs. And that's how it happened. One day, when I was picking flowers, I noticed two boys who were sitting on a hill, scowling at me and weeping. I asked them: "Why are you crying?" And they said, because the Germans have killed our Momma, and there's no Momma any more. The elder one got up, and clenching his fist at invisible enemies, cried: Oh, those Germans, I'll pay them back some day! And then he turned to me: Listen, do you know any anti-Nazi songs? I answered: No. Ok, so we will teach you, he said. And they taught me two songs.

The 1st song goes like that:

Siekiera, motyka, bimber, szklanka,
W nocy alarm, w dzień łapanka^b (and so on)

The 2nd song:

Pierwszy tydzień – sacharyna
Drugi tydzień – margaryna
Trzeci tydzień – nic nie dają
Czwarty tydzień – wysiedlają^c (and so on)

And they said to me: just don't sing them when the Germans are by, it's forbidden. Then I said: When the war is over, I'll sing these songs in German ears on purpose, and I think the war will be soon over. The elder said to this: My father has an illegal radio and listens to

^b An axe, a hoe, drink hooch and be gay,
At night alert, *łapanka* by day.

^c The first week – saccharin
The second week –margarine
The third week – nothing at all
The fourth week – resettle us all

foreign programmes. The Germans are being flanked: by the English on the one side, by the Russians on the other.

‘Has your grandmother got an illegal radio too?’

‘Sure, even two!’ I answered naively. (I just wanted to show off.)

‘Oh!’ the elder said, ‘So let her bring one for you’

‘Ok’ I said, ‘when she comes today I’ll tell her to bring me one of them.

I got a little confused, because I didn’t want them to see through me.

I called ‘Look! There’s a bonfire. Let’s go!’

A moment later we already stood by the bonfire.

‘Let’s play at pissing,’ the elder said.

‘Go ahead!’ the younger cried with laughter.

The elder urinated and then said to me:

‘Now your turn’

I said I couldn’t, and that I’ve just urinated. And then the elder gave himself away and told me to show him “what mine was like”. What could I do?

I said;

‘Oh! Granny’s coming’

And I ran home.

‘Come back!’ the elder cried. ‘We’ll go to the cinema. Come along.’

‘No,’ I answered.

I quickened my pace and then broke into a run home. (They didn’t play too wisely with me. If I were in their position, I’d do something much more clever. I’d try to keep that boy – that’s myself – in the forest as long as possible. I wouldn’t be able to bear it too long, after all, and would have to wee at last. Then they would see “what mine was like’. But they were fools.) I ran into the house and told Granny everything. I was upset, but I didn’t cry. Granny took me immediately to Warsaw to Mr and Mrs Dębski, Mrs Adamiak’s relatives. We went there by train. An hour after we left, Mrs Adamiak’s house was searched. Her nephew, whose role I was playing, has gone to Cracow, has he?

I didn’t do very well at the Dębskis’. Mrs Dębska didn’t give me food, and her son, Mundeck, who was 14, beat and bullied me as much as he could. I had nothing to do, and cleaning was not what I fancied to do at all. It’s true I had a Geographical Atlas but the Dębskis didn’t let me study it because it took up a lot of space when I opened it. But once when he was drunk Mr Dębski gave himself away a bit and I went to Mrs Balińska. It was the worst place I’ve ever been to. Why? I’ll explain it in a few complaints:

The 1st complaint:

Balińska was mad and hysterical, and her daughter was a devil incarnate. There were arguments between them every day. When I first came to them, Balińska was lying with her legs burnt because she had been making hooch. Myszka took advantage of her mother's situation and beat her and bullied her horribly. Still on the day of my arrival the following argument took place:

'Myszka, go to bed!'

'Pity you can't put a pamper on me and place me in a cradle'

'Róża, how does she talk to me!' Balińska was playing the role of somebody dying. 'God!'

And she called God's name.

'I won't talk!' Myszka cried. 'I'll act!'

And she grabbed a siphon with soda water and sprayed it in her mother's face.

'Somebody help me! Let somebody from the *Gestapo* come here!'

'Let them kill me! Let them kill me! I don't want to live any more!'

'Shut up, will you?!' – Myszka cried in rage. – And let a cat^d catch her! She hurled the soda siphon at the hysterical woman. The madwoman shut up, but the consequences were tragic indeed. She passed out, and blood ran down her face onto the white pillow. White-and-red, I thought, and suddenly, instead of pity, I felt a surge of deep hatred towards Poles. As if by accident, I sat down on Myszka's gramophone records. The three on top got broken. I covered them with paper and then tripped Myszka. But the shrew didn't fall. When Balińska came round, she saw a strange view. Myszka was trying to throttle me and crying: "Jew! Jew!" And though I was just being throttled I managed to add to each of her "Jew" the ending "ess", and the result was "Jewess! Jewess!". And then I came up with an excellent idea. I bombarded Myszka with insulting questions and escaped, leaving her confounded behind. Who did I go to? To Mrs Dębska.

But Dębska threw me out neck and crop. As the Balińskis lived on the ground floor I approached their flat from the backyard and peeped in through the window. There were Germans there, and I heard Balińska say:

'Don't you know that she is a Jewess?'

Gesticulating, she started saying something in German. The Germans laughed, then took some money from her. When they left I tapped on the window pane and Myszka opened the window and knocked me on the nose. I fell and got a bit bruised. I sat there a little and then

^d a pun: the name *Myszka* means *a mouse*

went to the front door and rang the bell as if I was just an ordinary acquaintance. Myszka opened the door and said: Ah! You scamp! I kicked her and hid in the wardrobe. Myszka tried to lock me out of spite. But I managed to throw a shirt on her head and when she was trying to take it off, she tangled herself in that shirt.

My main hiding places were: the wardrobe, behind the wardrobe, the toilet, then a dustbin, behind the chest, the bathroom, and the made up bed. The last on my list was the worst because one was in danger of suffocating. When I hid there first time I really thought I'd suffocate. In the other hiding places I sat all day. And I usually ate in the bathroom or in the kitchen. Though I spent there two months I couldn't get used to all those rows which were on an everyday basis. Before Christmas Granny peroxided my hair and it was typical "clair blond" (silver colour). But in the middle of my hair there was a bald patch because she burnt my hair and it hurt horribly. Then Granny bought me a tuft of hair of the same colour. It stuck out like a real fringe and I looked like a Pole. Throughout Christmas I sat behind and in the wardrobe. When I was in the wardrobe I had a lot of peace to think. I thought that when the war is over I'll take revenge on the Germans and on all the evil people I had met. When I was behind the wardrobe, on the other hand, I could listen to talks. Myszka as usual butted in when her elders were talking. She offended the guests with her behaviour. She scared all the guests away and on the following day nobody came and I could go out for the whole half-hour. In fact it's not much, but for me to leave the wardrobe and be free for half an hour was a lot. But as soon as Balińska heard some steps on the stairs, she told me to go back to the wardrobe. She gave me a book to read despite the fact that Myszka was against, and she even beat her own mother. I threw that book away, though I was horribly bored in that wardrobe. I had no toys, I had to sit idly. But I wanted to avoid the row because the neighbours would come and everything would start again. And I'd had enough of it all. Little by little my hair grew around the light patch and I became a guinea-hen, as Myszka said. Granny peroxided the hair and then, when my real hair grew under the artificial hair, she took off the artificial patch and peroxided my whole head again. I didn't know that the hair was black at the bottom. I gave myself a haircut with Myszka's huge scissors (she was a dressmaker). Balińska was terribly upset and locked me in the wardrobe. Were it not for Granny, it's a hundred per cent sure that I'd suffocate or ninety-nine percent that I'd go crazy. But I was already crazy anyway. If I'd stayed there longer they would have had to take me to a mental hospital.

Granny took me to Mrs Grodecka to Szustra Street. She had a seven-room apartment there. Her mother lived there too, a fifty-six year old woman. She had a friend, Mr Sawicki, and an eight-year-old son in my age, whose name was Andrzejek, like mine. So I was called

Jędrek and he was called Andrzejek. (At present they live in their flat and they're doing fine. When I grow up I'll take my revenge on them.) Mr Grodecki was in German captivity. At the beginning I felt there like in paradise. I went out every day, I ate well, played with Jędrek. And the mother and her friend were as sweet to me as candies. But already after the first month the candies started tasting bitter. They must've been stuffed with pepper. At first she took seven thousand [zloties], and then she wanted twelve thousand [zloties], and Granny didn't want to give her that much. So they started to stint on my food. She gave everything Granny brought to Andrzejek. She didn't let me come up to the window. She didn't let me go out. She made me make up the beds and sweep the floors. I hate such things; I'd prefer to read books. They kept peroxidizing my hair and I lost all of it. When it grew again, Granny died it black and said she won't do otherwise. Hearing this Grodecka said that if Granny doesn't peroxide my hair immediately, she'll go to the *Gestapo* and inform on me. So Granny replied that in this way Grodecka'll also inform on herself as she had kept me. So Grodecka went to Mr Sawicki, slapped him twice on the face and said that he was to blame for all that and now she has to suffer. And then Sawicki went to the police and informed on all of us. But when he came back with *Gestapo*-men, nobody was to be found in the flat any more. Granny went to Mrs Walter, Granny's acquaintance who saved us from death and didn't take a penny for it, to 17 Kaliska Street. When I grow up, I'll reward her for it. But she may be dead by then because she is already very old. She's looking for a flat and is in a very difficult situation. She was very kind to me. She took me for walks and looked after me very well. And Grodecka, when there had been a bombardment, just took her son, climbed down to a shelter and never thought about me. At that time a bomb hit a neighbouring house. The plaster from our ceiling fell on my head. I fell off my bed, the bed collapsed because it was just a camp bed, but luckily nothing happened to me.

On August 1, 1944[°] the uprising broke out. The Walters were the party people and they had known about the uprising, and on hearing the first shots the lawyer Mr Walter played the Polish national anthem and the patriotic song "Warszawianka". I don't remember anything from the uprising until the moment when a Hun entered the shelter and roared "Raus!". They made us stand at the gate, our faces towards the wall, our hands up. One small child turned back and saw a revolver aimed at it, and they killed that child. I prayed. Then they drove us to a square and beat me with a truncheon and it hurt. They killed a lot of people and I saw such horrifying people who were burnt alive and I saw people burning and crying and jumping off

[°] In the original: 1 July, 1944.

windows and killing themselves that way. And I saw an even worse incident. A German took a woman's child and when she started to cry and beat him, he kicked her in the face and started to torment the child. He flayed the child, broke its teeth, broke its arm and nose and then threw it into fire still alive. Then the woman started from the ground and hit him on the face. She kicked him twice in the belly, broke two of his teeth, and then jumped into fire. There was a lot of money scattered on the ground, but when one man picked up a thousand zloties, a German undressed him and killed him, and then burnt the corpse. But the worst thing was that that woman cried horribly when she was in fire. I couldn't look at all those atrocities, but Granny looked at them and she later told me.

They took us to a camp at Pruszków. I caught scarlet fever there. They took me to hospital. I was fine there and stayed there for six weeks. Granny was without a penny, she had no financial resources. We slept two days and two nights at R[ada] G[łówna] O[piekuńcza]. Then Granny went to her acquaintances, Mr and Mrs Talar. They took us in, but the conditions there were horrible. I was infested with lice, ate only dry brown bread. I slept in my clothes, Granny in her dress. Granny had only one shirt and one dress. When she wanted to wash her shirt, she slept in her dress. And when she wanted to wash her dress, she put Mrs Talar's coat on her shirt. The family of the caretaker was poor, but kinder to me than Mrs Talar. They gave me shoes and trousers, I got a dinner every day, and I made friends with their daughter Kazia.

Granny had to walk a long distance (45 kilometres) to trade and earn a living. She bought me two eggs, a loaf of bread and a big piece of back fat. All the time when the two small little girls didn't want to eat something and left it, I snatched it and ate. I licked candy wrappings, ate all the leftovers. And now I had my own food. She also bought me two notebooks, because Ewa and Kicia had torn mine. Then Granny met a man called Olek, a fur trader and we moved in with him to Włochy near Warsaw. He was a rich anti-Semite. He laughed at Jews, but he was good to me. He helped Poles very much. He arranged some clothes for me, gave us food, so much of it that we could burst from overeating. And it is at his place that we lived to see the Russians come.

I don't remember the moment itself of liberation that well, because I was at home. I was still sad and so was Granny, because Granny didn't have her children, and I didn't have my Mommy. At the very beginning there was still hunger, the only thing we had was potatoes. I was sitting at home and then suddenly I heard a noise and a scream. I ran out into the street and saw a mass of soldiers in the square and a lot of people around. I dashed into the house and wrote a poem "To a Polish soldier", and I wrote in it that these soldiers are awaited

and that they liberated the whole nation. (What would it have been like if I'd seen Polish soldiers and didn't write anything for them? I would've been the worst scoundrel.) I took that piece of paper, stuck it to a piece of cardboard: I still had a little glue left over from Christmas when I'd made toys for the Christmas tree, and I stuck it to the back of the car with drawing-pins so that nobody knew it was me and so that they had a surprise. I ran back home very fast. The first to see it was the chauffer. He started to read and after a few minutes a whole crowd congregated at the car and started reading the poem aloud. Everybody asked who wrote it, but nobody saw me and nobody knew it was my work. Only a few days later I said I'd written that poem, but the car was already gone. It went further on, to chase the Germans away.

And then a new life began for me. My eyes didn't see any more Germans. It serves them right, damn them! I didn't have to hide any more, I was free. I went where I wanted. I played outside with children, but nobody knew that I was a Jew. Granny said it's better not to say. We lived for two more months in our old flat. And then Granny packed our things and took me and we went to Łódź. In Łódź there were a lot of vacant flats. Granny moved in one of them and we still live in it. Then Granny started working and sent me to the school which I attend still. I learnt to laugh and smile at people. I unlearnt to be afraid all the time. And what's most important, I learnt to be a child. And this is one reason why I don't like war movies. They make me afraid, cause the horrible fear which I'll never be cured of, because it's deep, and my laughter is only a cover. Even now I'm still thinking of what I went through at that place of Balińska's when I cried that I didn't want to live any more. I remember those sleepless apathetic nights very well. But under that apathy there was despair, and under the despair there was envy, and under the envy – hatred – and under the hatred – rebellion. I didn't imagine I would be able to live and write about it some day. But writing is not all. Writing is very little. I'd like to be big and take revenge for my mother, for that boy, for all the suffering I've seen. Even now at night I can see all those nightmares from the days of the occupation. Sometimes I wake up at night, sweating, because I can see the Germans and have an impression that they are coming towards me and Granny, and want to kill us. I also dream about all the rooms, the hideouts, and the people I stayed with. Now I want to learn, I want to play and write. I must work very hard now, to make up for all that time.

My strongest experience from the times of the occupation was when I parted with Mommy. Another, when I was on the Aryan side and looked at the burning city of Warsaw. And one more, when I saw the Jews being beaten. I can't forget the scene of the search at the Balińskis.

Now I am with Granny and I'm Andrzej Czajkowski, because this is what Granny wants. And I'm still too small to get my own way and disobey Granny.

Recorder's signature: Silkes Genia

Witness's signature: Krauthaner Andrzej