This document is an English language translation of Polish Language Testimony submitted to *Yad Vashem* 12 / III / 1959 by **Michalina Auerbach *nee* Pickholz** *– also known as* **Olga Barniczowa** : Translated by Anna Mecik 2 / V / 2016

Michalina Auerbach, maiden name Pickholz - Born June 27th 1914 in *Lwow*.

*Alias name* Olga Barniczowa from the time of Second World War.

**Parents**: Pickholz Maurycy, born December 15th 1881 in *Grzymalowie* (son of Joseph and Zisli (maiden name Gruber) and Pickholz Fryderyka (maiden name Mehrer) born September 26th 1883 in *Lwow*.

**Brother**: Pickholz, Henryk Arnold, MD, born April 13th 1904 in *Lwow*.

(Brother’s) Wife: Pickholz, Slawka, born 1909 in *Lwow*

**Husband**: Auerbach, Leon, son of Saloman and Debora, born June 24th 1909 in *Stanislawow*.

No one listed above survived the war, details of their deaths will be explained in my testimony.

**Social status**

Before the war I was living in a very affluent, intellectual, Jewish society. I graduated from *Lwow University* with degree in sociology. Among my friends were many *Lwow University* students and graduates, employees of the *Galicja Corporation* oil company and an insurance company “*Reunione Adriatica di Si aurta”*.

I got married in February 1937 and left for *Vienna*, *Austria*. I returned back to *Poland* in October 1938. In that time my most important relationships were with my family and very close friends. They were lawyers and doctors, **Mehrer**, **Zellermajer** and pharmacist who is currently in *Australia*, medical student who died by Polish student of *Lwow University*. Pharmacist named **Tenenbaum** (from my family, survived only one cousin her name Rosa Tenenbaum, who is living in *Canada* with her brother Dr. Izydor **Liebling** who was saved after war and her son.) Dr. **Kurzrock** (neurologist who together with Polish military survived the period of war in hospital in *Hungary* working as a doctor and returned after war to *Poland*, worked and lived in *Bytom*, he eventually died there. His wife was also a doctor, maiden name Salamander. With her children she was taken to *Siberia* by Russians because she was the wife of a Polish officer who did not return immediately back to *Poland*. Later when he returned to *Bytom* he applied for her return from *Siberia* which she did, **Dr. Karol Markel** paediatrician was murdered along with his brother **Wilhelm Markel**, who was an employee of a bank in *Lwow*. One of my friends Julia **Oberlander**, daughter of lawyer from *Brzezan* (is dead.) Emil **Igel** editor of *Momentum*, Dr. Bruno **Friedman** (died during the war.) As many others. Together with my brother who belonged to *Haszomer Hacair* and *Hasmonei*, I knew people that were in his circles.

**Time in Vienna**

*Vienna* was supposed to be my permanent residence. Unfortunately during

the time Hitler took over *Austria* (March of 1938,) this had a very negative impact

on our lives and plans to reside in *Austria*.

I witnessed the native Viennese triumphant enthusiasm at Hitler’s coming. We remained indoors observing this through our window curtains. Soon persecution of Jews and former supporters of *Austrian* government started.

We were then forced to leave *Vienna*. We were planning at that time illegal immigration to *Palestine*. I didn’t want to be so far from my closest family. My husband and I decided to return back to *Poland* in September 1938. The experience of Hitler’s persecutions and knowledge of the details were deeply imprinted in my memory. We didn’t suffer personally but we saw humiliation of people who had to crawl many hours on their knees over specially prepared sharp gravel. Soon after our friends were arrested, their ashes were quickly returned to their family members with false diagnosis of death related illnesses.

The first persecutions were towards political parties for political reasons and then towards the wealthy people. Germans were creating smoke screens to disguise the mass persecutions, torture and murders. Later in *Poland* all of those criminal acts were done in the full day light and with extreme sadism. When German invasion in *Poland* took place in 1939 we asked my parents to leave *Lwow* right away and go to *Romania*.

My brother was drafted into the Polish Army on the *Czestochowa* front. The rest of the family went to *Tarnopol* to meet with my father’s brother-in-law, Salomon **Lippman**, his wife Gusta Lippman (maiden name Pikholz) and their children Anna **Schwefelgeist***-* maiden name Lippman (Dr Jakub Schwefelgeist was murdered in a concentration camp and Anna in *Mauthausen*) and Dr. David **Lippman** (currently in *Gdansk*) and also with Gustaw **Migden** and his wife Frejda - maiden Pikholz, to decide together on a plan for escape to *Romania*. Our plans were defeated due to indecision and then came Russian invasion.

**Soviet Invasion**

    I found out that all of the POW officers were gathered into a train station. I went there to look for my brother. (It was a transport directed East, probably to *Katyn*), I met there the chief surgeon and urologist from *Lazarus Hospital* in *Lwow* Dr. **Oberlander** who was my brother’s superior, and also the attorney **Switajlo** (I heard that in 1957 he came to *Israel*) I gave them food and started my intervention with the commanding officer of the town to free them.  I was able before their departure to convince the Soviet officer to allow us to go for a walk through town. We never returned we were able to escape.

   Dr Oberlander survived entire occupation working as a gardener near *Czestochowa*. I am writing about this because this was a tragic fate for doctors who could no longer work at their profession, especially during the time of war.  The lady he was working for needed emergency surgery, there were no doctors around. Dr Oberlander stood there and was not able to reveal he was a doctor. He was unable to help otherwise he would have revealed he was a doctor. He revealed to me after the war how much he struggled not being able to help this woman. After the war he returned to *Poland* where he was able to continue his professional career as a surgeon. The lawyer Switajlo survived the war.

     Until June of 1941, the date when Germany attacked Soviets, I spent in *Lwow*. I was working as a clerk thanks to my knowledge of Ukrainian and Russian languages.

My husband who was a lawyer was also hired as a clerk. This period had a decisive influence on history of Jewish society of *Malopolsce*. The influence was extremely varied depending on social status and political preferences.

As I remember families of wealthy Jewish merchants having before the war large contacts with foreign trades, like family of Zipper and Bankers Schutz and Chajes and many others were able to move to western Europe, similarly like the lesser merchant and industrialists. There were possibilities to escape through *Wilno, Kowno* and *Ryge za granice*. During the time when Soviet Union annexed *Lithuania* and *Latvia* they were given Visas and later they started duplicating and forging the Visas. This way people were able to get out of this hell. There were a considerable amount of people that decided to stay. Small business owners decided to stay but they did not avoid persecutions. Those who stayed were persecuted, (like Grosskopf owner of machinery and bikes while the rest of his family went to *Palestine*).

Other people were hiding in the countryside. Selling their businesses or their business were taken away from them. Those who had insignificant businesses and craft men were able to survive. Life was in a constant stress, to not be identified or reported by enemies. There was an underground currency exchange and underground illegal small business and exchange.  Most people were taking work in clerical positions and government offices.

Significant numbers of the educated middle class were swayed towards communism because of the testimony of people that escaped from German occupied territories, reporting of horrific persecutions under German occupation.  There was intense belief in the power of the Soviet Union. They had a big hope of the ability of the power of the Soviet Union. The fact that they signed a non-aggression pact with Germany opened new hope that there would be no war.

I didn't know what was going on among Jewish working class. During this time I met many Jewish and non-Jewish communists. Some were released from jails and some escaped from German occupied territories. They were coming to the office where I was working and they started to have the ability of taking an active role according to their political convictions. They were very upset that they were not invited to join the communist party. They could not understand this until KPP in 1956.

In a moment of the war between Germany and Soviets a huge part of the leftist middle class went together with the Russian military further to the east. The news of the Nazis extreme cruelty prompted many people to go further to the East. I want to emphasize that everything I am writing about was personal experience, memory and all things that stayed in my memory.  All of these events are causing me continuous struggling to answer the question I hear here in *Israel*, why in the *Lwow ghetto* there was no resistance like in *Warsaw ghetto*. As a historian I am interested in analysis and concrete facts which are not available to me. All other opinions are mostly subjective.

When war of 1941 began between Germans and Soviets this was a big shock.  It was even a bigger shock because I was on vacation. I went to *Truskawcu* to a sanatorium run by **Dr. Monis** who was urologist from *Lwow*, he was a friend of my family. Dr. **Mehrer** who was my cousin was there too.  The war started while I was on vacation. The city of *Drohobycz* was bombed first while I was on a freight train carrying Russian officers. In that way I got home. Nobody from my family, including me, had the intention of escape to the East even though we knew that war was awaiting us. Just the opposite: I even took my cheque book.

**The Nazi Occupation:**

I lived in *Lvow* in *Tomickiego Street* opposite a large building, which in the Soviet period was converted into a prison (*Lackiego Street*). Despite the thick walls we could often hear the tortured screaming. After the Nazis seized the town, they got down to prisons, this is what happens in war. Stories were told then about people who were found walled up alive in the thick prison walls; there were also many corpses in the basements and dungeons in *Kazimierzowska Street*. In the yard of *Lacki Street prison* there was a mass grave of people shot just before the Soviet troops left the town. This grave was excavated now. The people needed to do the labour of excavation were brought by Ukrainians, who from the very beginning were at the Nazis command. Primarily they pointed to Jewish apartments, from which people were later brought to the prison yard. My landlady’s servant’s fiancé pointed to our apartment, which was shortly before left by the aforementioned cousin, Dr **Mehrer** (He died tragically at the beginning of 1946 in *Katowice*, shot in his own flat by the *National Armed Forces* (NSZ) after having survived a tragic period of occupation in Warsaw to where he had escaped, as well as the *Pawiak Prison*).

I was at home with my husband. I answered the door after persistent banging at it and then my husband was dragged out. I followed him and saw him being taken to the prison yard. For several hours I kept standing outside the gate, through which carts full of corpses were carried out. I heard a lot of gunshots and in the evening, silence fell over the place. None of the people waiting outside the gate could see anybody alive being brought back through the gate. Some of them claimed that they must have been shot dead after doing their job, others said that they were kept inside overnight to continue work the following morning. Anyway, on the next day I went there again together with other people, but not a sound could be heard outside the gate this time.

This was the first direct shock – **I had lost my husband**. Later, some Christians approached me saying that my husband had been carried away to the *Stanislawow* area, and he was sending a message that he was alive and asked me to send him clothes, shoes and underwear so that he could escape and return home. I realised these people were cheating me, but every time I gave them clothes. In that time being unable to accept misfortune, I stayed with my parents or with my brother working at the *Jewish Hospital*. Events developed quickly and everybody, when observing themselves, had to admit that due to the current events they became callous, indifferent, numb and insensitive to everything. Hardly anything could reach people’s awareness.

I managed to get away from this mental state through my active work for *Judenrat* where I was made to plunge into hard work. The Jewish society, seriously thinned out by the aforementioned events, threatened already in the Soviet period, the society which went through the period of bombing raids and the related human losses, looked for some opportunities to stay alive, nevertheless. Actually, the Nazis themselves imposed it on them.

***Judenrat* ( Jewish Council )**

Soon after the Nazis seized *Lwow*, the occupying authorities issued an order establishing *Judenrat*. As far as I know**, Dr Parnas** was summoned and ordered to create an autonomous representative council to govern the interests of the *Lwow* Jewish community, also commanded to submit a *list of the names* of the community for whom he could vouch for with his life, and who would be accountable to the occupying authorities as well as to the representative council.

I don’t exactly whether the composition of the *Judenrat* was based on any party political basis. What I know is that the leading representative positions were taken by serious people respected by the whole society. It included **Dr Landesberg**, **Dr Rotfeld** – both lawyers – **Seinfeld**, who was a Hasidic Jew (without beard but with permanently covered head) and a number of others, whose names I cannot remember. The direct contact with the occupying authorities and the duty of reporting every day at the *Gestapo Headquarters* belonged primarily to Dr Parnas. He was given the orders that had to be obeyed by the whole community, and he was called to other German institutions as an official representative.

Because Germans immediately after seizing the town began to take apartments in the best districts and throwing people out into the street without letting them take anything with them, and using round-ups in the streets and from homes in order to acquire a labour force to prepare buildings and barracks for the army, Dr Parnas often intervened effectively to release large groups of people from this duty.

It was due to his personal stance that he was shot for refusing to obey orders intended to hurt our society.

Dr Landesberger behaved in the same way and suffered the same fate.

Then the members of *Judenrat* often changed, people lost their lives and all the time someone was missing.

The only one who died naturally (of leukemia) at home was Dr Rotfeld. In the *Judenrat* he dealt with the internal organisational issues. I know all this well as I worked for *Judenrat* for a short time as his secretary.

Within a short time Judenrat had established the organisational network, ie, the *departments* indispensable in following the orders of the *Occupying authorities*:

Labour Department – Abeitsamt

Supply Department – supplies and distribution

Housing Department – in connection with the Ghetto development

Furniture Department

Financial Department

Welfare Department

Militia

Here is a short description of every department and their tasks:

**Arbeitsamt**:

Headed by Muna **Hoch**, Dr **Blader** and other lawyers; Zuza **Linakerowa-Hefterowa** was also active here.

In many cases, they managed to obtain the release of large groups of people *rounded-up* from the streets or from homes for the purpose of forced labour, by means of buying them from the Nazis with money provided by *Judenrat* and without differentiating and segregating people from amongst any group of the hostages.

The tasks of this department included the providing the Nazis with people to do all sorts of work. The number of labourers demanded was often enormous and tragic bargaining took place to reduce this number of people, who were often doomed to extermination. They sometimes wanted experts, whose lives later appeared to be relatively bearable. The Jewish *Militia* was also involved in the process of selection of these people. *Arbeitsamt* also issued labour force ID which were given to provide effective protection against round-ups. The ID’s were stamped by the Nazi authorities. Although people had a lot of complaints addressed to Hoch, it is difficult even now through the perspective of time, to assess whether or not the complaints were well founded, realising how terrible his position was with regard to the demands of the occupying authorities. A fair assessment must not be made on the basis of individual statements.

In this connection, I would like to indicate an extraordinarily perfidious trick played by the Nazis.

In 1942 as agreed with and permitted by the *Occupying authorities* the so-called “*Staatliche Werkstatten*” were created. It was a work place for specialists in different manufacturing industries. Two buildings in *Kazmierzowska* were emptied for this purpose. Each ID cost 4,000 zlotys to be paid by the community to the Nazis. The ID was to be an effective protection of the specialists against forced labour or deportation. Later when thousands of people applied for this job, the Community could not cope with the financial liabilities and paid only for those possessing nothing, whilst others had to pay the necessary sum on their own.

Machines and raw materials for different products were brought and the workshops operation was to be launched. However, one day the building was surrounded by troops and everybody inside was taken away to a sandy area and killed.

**Supply Department**:

The manager in charge was Dr Rotfeld’s brother, who may still be alive. Other people working in this department included **Dr Buber** and at the beginning, also my cousin, **Dr Jakub Mehrer**.

Food supply was extremely difficult. In the *ghetto* there was a network of groceries consisting of about 60 stores with managers and assistants. Food was provided there according to the announced volumes, but the rations were really beggarly. Brown bread, half a kilo of potatoes per week, groats and very rarely a piece of sausage. The supply came from the *Landswirtschaftliche Zentrallstalle* ( Agricultural Agency ).

Potatoes were collected in different places in the country, where the Supply Department clerks were sent with groups of workers on trucks. Under the supervision of Germans, Ukrainians and Lithuanians, well-known for their cruelty, and accompanied by beatings and shootings, the people loaded potatoes from storage dumps. Due to the very low rations *Judenrat* tried to buy greater amounts privately from farmers and to carry them to town with the official consignment of rations. These very dangerous manipulations were conducted in order to better supply the people, who were starving to death. Not many housewives accumulated supplies during the Soviet period of occupation, and anyway, even if they had it wouldn’t last for long. In numerous households, the basic food was cutlets made of minced potato peels.

**Housing Department , called *Wohnungsamt***:

**Dr Axer, Dr Jakub Hausmann, Filek Tauber** and others.

The task of the Housing Department was to give accommodation to people in the *ghetto*. It was not an easy task when you had to cram 8 or 9 people into one room, when thousands of strangers who arrived from clean comfortable well-furnished and well-looked-after apartments now had to stay in shabby holes at *Zamarstynow* or *Zolkiewska*. Undoubtedly, there were a lot of opportunities for dirty earnings for agents investigating the housing density, as well as nepotism.

A small group of people employed in *Judenrat* and German institutions were given temporary permission to stay in their own apartments in the town outside the *ghetto*. They had a special label on the door protecting the apartment against occupation and protecting their belongings from confiscation.

It also happened that Germans themselves came to the *Wohnungsamt* and demanded accommodation for the Jews employed in their homes or offices. These interventions were often unpleasant.

I remember when an *Ober*- or *Untersharfuhrer* (senior or junior squad leader) came to intervene for about 5 Jews and he approached Tauber demanding an immediate provision of accommodation for ‘*his people*’. He received a polite reply that it would be *settled only when possible*. It was not enough. The German grabbed Tauber’s Adam’s apple so hard that he turned blue. Satisfied with what he did to Tauber, the German shouted: “*Na und jetzt? Jetzt wird die Sache bestimmt sofort erlidigt. So muss man eben euch, Saujuden, Ordnung lehren*”. [*And what now? Now, the problem is to be settled immediately. You Jewish sows have to be taught order* ].

**Furniture Department**:

This department was to acquire furniture to fulfil the occupying authority’s orders and to deliver it to the given addresses. The orders were not modest. Luxury furniture was demanded, with the type of wood and colour indicated. The orders were for sets of furniture and equipment for dining rooms, bedrooms, living rooms, also for musical instruments. The required dates for delivery were often prompt.

The Department was initially headed by a man from *Crakow*: respectable, cultured, knowing how to talk to his clients; I can’t remember his name. He was killed by the Nazis very soon. He was succeeded by **Teichholz**, supposedly the Chairman of a *Vienna* Kibbutz later.

**Financial Department**:

This name was officially given when *Judenrat* was organised. But this Department also included other matters. First of all, the acquisition of cash for bribing different Nazi ‘celebrities’ to either satisfy their demands connected with buying out groups of people held by *Arbeitsampt*, orfor resolving their other demands that were unfeasible. Contributions imposed on the Jewish Community amounting to millions of zlotys were collected separately.

Besides this, the agents of this Department as well as others were actively working on all sorts of non-cash transactions, as for example … …

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Quite many people deposited their furs with Christians to be disappointed later. They may have been lucky to survive the *Occupation* but they usually didn’t regain their property. The *ski project* misfired. People preferred to burn skis, which presented no difficulty, rather than give them to the Nazis. I did it this way and so did everybody around.

**Welfare**:

This Department had a difficult task due to the maintenance of the *Lazarus Hospital* in *Rappaport Street*, which Jews were allowed to use until the *ghetto* boundary was established. For some time it was headed by **Dr Hescheles**, and **Dr Leopold Aleksandrowicz** worked there as well as my brother and others.The medical work was really hindered due to shrinking supplies of medicines and bandages as well as ‘*Special Actions*’ conducted inside the hospital. Every day we watched doctors disappear, losing their lives as happened to Dr Hescheles, to Dr Aleksandrowicz or others trying to escape to save their lives. **Dr Koch Tusk** suffered a tragic fate, he was captured outside *Kleparov Station* and hanged head down outside *Janowska Camp*. He was hanging there upside-down for a number of days as a warning to others.

Over time, the hospital was deprived of the qualified nursing staff. The spreading *typhoid* and infectious diseases were initially dealt with in the hospital. However, patients were given the so-called “*convalescence treatment*” and later, people tried to look after these *convalescent* patients at home.

Only **Dr Weigl** had some opportunities to do research work on his *typhoid vaccine*.

Together with my brother I often visited my patients at home. After their operation patients were transferred home as soon as possible to protect them against possible anti-Jewish *actions*. Due to the shortage of bandages, I boiled the used dressings to use them again for other patients.

**Militia**:

It seems that all the operation of *militia* was the same everywhere. It was not praiseworthy In *Lwow* it was headed by Rosenblum, or *Rosenblum of Cheirut*.

I know about him only that at the meeting of this party held in 1942 in the *Judenrat’s* loft he proposed capturing some weapons which would allow for the annihilation of the Germans guarding the *ghetto* so that a group of people provided with money could get through the *Carpathian Mountains* to *Hungary*. At the same meeting the obstacles to the proposal were discussed with regard to the necessity for the escapees to pass through *Ukrainian villages*, the uncertainty and unfamiliarity with the road and the difficulty in finding a trustworthy guide.

Apparently, general *Zionists* did not support these plans which were not in with a chance to save a majority of the people.

The tasks of *militia* included bringing groups of people to work, in particular, to the ***Janowska Camp***, the place of torment where, in tragically bestial ways the Nazis finished off people during work and after work. Bestial games were played by *Gestapo* officers included shooting people during the forced gymnastics exercises held after exhausting manual labour, in the form of running around the barbed wire perimeter surrounding the camp. In the course of running some people were shot dead and the others had to run on irrespective of the obstacles in their way. This sophisticated bestiality is beyond comprehension. A man working in the camp and living with me in the same house told me about it every day when he was coming back home. When there was some space left by those who were finished off, the next group of people were brought in to stay inside the camp.

Although so many people tried to get a job in the *militia* hoping to rescue themselves and their families, many of them suffered a completely different fate. While they were away, their families disappeared from their homes, called by name and taken away by the *Gestapo*.

**Anti-Jewish operations**:

The management of *Judenrat* did not always succeed in preventing different kinds of *operations* or having their dates changed. What’s more, the Nazis often carried out the operations without warning the *Judenrat*. In August 1941 there was an *operation* against women. They were taken away from the street and from their homes unless they could present an appropriate employment document. I was most unfortunate to lose in this *operation* the dearest person to me – **my mother**. She was captured at home, as were many other Jewish women, doing housework.

The certificate indicating that **my father** worked in the military area (he worked in a hospital as an orderly) was of no avail, nor were mine or my brother’s certificate. After we returned home that night, we could only see a piece of paper on the table with just a few words written “*Kinder, nicht weinen*” [“Kids, don’t cry”]. It was written in German because we used this language at home as a result of being brought up in *Vienna*. When leaving home she deluded herself, as neighbours reported, that she would be taken to work and not to *the sands*. Tragically, all of the interventions and money we offered were ineffective.

The *operations* against the elderly were tragic indeed. The picture of about 60 old naked Jews with white beards all loaded onto a truck was dreadful.

I was not saved from seeing an *operation* against children. I can’t get rid of the image of a Gestapo man who grabbed a 2-year old child’s feet and hit the child’s head against a wall a couple of times until the brain shattered.

*Operation “Bridge”* was held in the middle of 1942, when the ghetto was made smaller. Behind the bridge at *Zarmarstynow*, which everybody had to use, there were some sheds. Elderly people going through the gate were dragged there and killed. It was the only place to get through so it was impossible to avoid the *operation*.

At that time 10 *Judenrat* members were hanged in the windows of the building assigned as the new seat of the *Judenrat*.

And eventually the last *operation* which I experience took effect on 17 November 1942. It was an *operation* against working people that began early in the morning, before the large columns left for work. All the people were driven to a large square and only a few ID’s were honoured. Few Germans appeared, and those who did were there only to bargain for some of their people. People were loaded into tramway lorries and taken to the *Kleparov Station* from where they were transported to the crematorium at *Belzec*. **I lost my father then**. I will return to this issue while describing my own experiences.

**Lists of important people**:

The Jewish society complained about the mess in *Judenrat* and the too slow pace of settlement of matters, however, it should be realised how difficult a mission the *Judenrat* had to pursue and in what conditions the work was being done; how often the people who were assigned some tasks to accomplish did not turn up anymore because, in the course of doing their duty they lost their lives. Or there might have been a chance to run away and rescue their own life in this way, only to, like for example **Rentschner** (Iron wholesaler) spend a year and a half under a pigsty in the country. The *Occupation’s* perfidy had no limitations. Soon after *Judenrat* was established, we were ordered to make a list of working *intelligentsia* - the professions, engineers, physicians, lawyers – the most valuable professionally and morally, whom the *Judenrat* considered to be indispensable for the Jewish Community and whom the *Judenrat* wanted to protect against possible repressions.

Our work to make this list was headed by **Dr Rotfeld**. We naturally wondered whether it was a trick or whether what *the Occupiers* had actually said was true. Because it was the beginning of *the Occupation* we believed the intentions were good. The list was based on the telephone directory. In the course of the work, names were mentioned of which I either knew well or did not know. There were the names of my relatives, for example **Dr Markel** who has already been mentioned. When my brother’s name was mentioned, acting out of my inner instinct I said that the very fact of his work in the hospital is sufficient to protect him from repression and he didn’t need any more security. For this reason the names of Doctors employed in the hospital were also not included in the list.

It soon turned out that the list was used for other purposes and those people began to disappear after being taken away from their homes at night, allegedly as hostages, and never to be seen again.

**My own experiences**:

Here I have to return chronologically to 1941, when I began to work for *Judenrat*.

In connection with the supply problems, which were particularly significant for us, the *Agricultural Agency* needed a few women good at German and typing to settle paper-work formalities related to the rationing of potatoes for *Judenrat* (this clerical work was not to be remunerated). As there was nobody among us to do the job, I took this duty myself, and at the same time I called the aforementioned **Julia Oberlander**, an excellent German stenographer. Three other persons joined us, but they were not able to cope with the assignment. We made feverish efforts to complete a lot of outstanding work. The Nazis were rushing us and frowning at us even though we did our jobs three times faster than the Polish girl working there. When all the outstanding work was done, *Judenrat* was asked to leave us both there with the remuneration usually given to Jews, ie, at a considerably lower wage than that offered to Poles.

From then on, my immediate superior was **Schranz Hans**, who came from western Germany and with the *NDSAP* (Nazi Party) badge in his jacket lapel. Because his *VolksDeutsch* (ethnic German) secretary-typist didn’t know German stenography well enough and made mistakes in German, he made her a typist filling in forms and I was to take her position. Fortunately, she understood that I never intended to push her aside. However, the boss had to resign from the hitherto practice of sharing the office with his secretary and I obtained a small private room. Due to my appearance and command of German he also decided that I should not wear my *Star of David* badge inside the office, in order not to put off his German clients.

It was great fun for him when he heard his clients bluntly accost me. However, while the correspondence was being dictated and rations assigned, I was able to acquire some additional amounts for *Judenrat*. In return he became a “*client interested in furs and other things*”.

Before long, a ban on employment of Jews in State Institutions came from *Berlin*, even whilst there shortages of suitably qualified people in the Polish workforce with an appropriate knowledge of German language. For his own convenience he kept me till the very last moment and then he sent me to a private German firm called *Olff Kopke & Co*., dealing with the distribution of vegetables and fruit for Germans. A Nazi from *Chemnitz* was the boss. I can’t remember his name. He was so kind that he addressed me as *Frau Auerbach*, yet every now and then he expressed his contempt for Jews. The whole staff consisted of four Germans having their sinecures in *Lvow* and thus avoiding frontline service. There was another Jewish woman employed as a housekeeper (luxury dinners and suppers were made at the apartment behind the office in *Zimorowicza Street*) as well as a group of Jewish delivery workers. It was peculiar that all the Germans ate at the apartment except for the boss, who didn’t want to eat any meals prepared by a Jew.

My responsibilities included correspondence to be done on my own as well as financial settlements with customers, ie, retail outlets. Once when I was making a settlement with the wife of a shop-owner in *Smolka Square* and she had come to the office, and with our conversation naturally in German, she passed to me a note in Polish asking me to come after work and use the back door to visit her at the shop. I decided to accept the invitation and was given an exceptionally warm welcome. My bag was filled with southern fruit: oranges and dates. The lady asked me about my private affairs, which I approached with great reserve. She invited me to call again. As I didn’t go back, she phoned me at the office and asked me to come on the pretext of making settlements in her shop. I went to her and there she gave me, in secrecy from her husband, her own original *Baptismal Certificate* in the name of **Olga Barnicz**. She told me her family came from *Drohobych*, where she was born and that I could use it to show of my Ukrainian relatives. Her husband, of German descent, was a *VolksDeutsch* and that was why they had a shop. She asked me to trust her that she realy wanted to do a favour for me. She didn’t need her *Baptismal Certificate* any more as she had now a *Marriage Certificate*. She didn’t want any compensation. On the contrary, she advised me to give it all up and go to the countryside because *Lwow* faced a final holocaust according to the information she had acquired from the Nazis.

Indeed, I was fired a few days later as a result of the ban of the employment of Jews also in private firms. It was September 1942.

At this time, my brother informed me at the last moment that he had arranged for a car to travel to *Hungary*. This expedition, in which three of us took part – my father could not make a decision – was a failure. When late at night we were about to get into the car, we heard shots and we scattered in different directions. I stood behind a wall and was not seen, yet I couldn’t see anything myself. When it became quiet I didn’t go along that street, but used a side-street to go to town unseen. I stayed overnight with the Christian’s I knew and in the morning I came back to the *ghetto* where I found my brother working in the hospital. My **sister-in-law** had been shot dead during the chase. It must have been a betrayal of obscure origin.

I didn’t go to *Judenrat* to work, I was working as a kitchen maid peeling vegetables in a kitchen for railway workers. A *railway ID* was secure protection against *round-ups*.

It was then that the aforementioned *operation* of 17 November came, during which even *railway IDs* were not honoured.

Early in the morning people were driven away from their homes long before the time to go to work. My brother was on duty in hospital and I was driven with my father to *Umschlagplatz* where we were separated: I was with other women and he was with the men. Having been whipped on my back I was pushed onto a tramway lorry going to the *Kleparov Station*. I had to take off my coat. There was a pile of coats on the ground. Surprisingly, they let me keep my handbag, where I had my mother’s wristwatch. I had mine on my wrist and nobody noticed it. Also my ring remained on my finger. When the train left for *Belzec* in the evening, a group of youngsters aged 8 – 12 came up to us and asked what the destination was. *Probably death*. “*But we don’t want to die*” cried the boys. “*We have pincers and we’ll try to cut the barbed wire in the car window*”. They produced small clippers. The window was quite high and three boys had to stand on each other to reach it. Somehow we made it and were soon helping each other and running away. I was the 11th to jump out of the window. That much I can remember. I paid no attention to the shots fired into the darkness by the *Gestapo* transport escorts standing on the steps of the car. I only wanted to jump out into the place where there were no stones. Suddenly I woke up in absolute silence and darkness. I could feel blood on my left hand. It turned out that I had landed on the left side and subconsciously wanted to protect my eye with my hand. The wound was small and it was caused by the ring on my finger which changed shape as a result of the impact of my fall. I am still wearing the ring in the same condition. At first I didn’t feel any injuries. As if hypnotised I realised in which direction I was walking and I then began to march in the opposite direction to walk away from the railway embankment.

Instinctively I knocked at the door of a village hut on the way. A rude Ukrainian’s voice called me names and threatened to give me up to the Gestapo. I got away quickly and walked on. In the silence I realised I was being followed. It was a man in workwear who caught up with me. Assessing from the way I was dressed on a November night without an outer coat, he realised I had come from the train.

To calm me down he began speaking *Yiddish*. We walked on together and he gave me his coat to warm me up. On the way we met a country woman who confirmed we were approaching *Zolkiew*. Well after dawn broke we were close to the first houses at *Zolkiew* and it turned out to be the *ghetto* border. In order not to arouse suspicions of passers-by, I wanted to wash away the bllod from my face. It is to be sadly admitted that a woman wearing a wig, standing on the doorstep, refused to give water to me. We walked on to meet some Jews who pointed to a small house where we would certainly be helped. And they really did let us in. Because I had a shivering fit and my left hand was swollen and painful, I clung to an old sack offered to me. My companion in misery walked on to see his relatives at *Zolkiew* but he promised to call a doctor for me. And really, pretty soon a doctor arrived and told me to stay in bed as I had a suspected bone fracture. He promised to cable my brother and ask the *Zolkiew Judenrat* to arrange for my return to *Lvow*. Meanwhile, news spread around *Zolkiew* that the anti-Jewish operation had begun there too. What to do? The other part of this small house belonged to a Ukrainian family, allegedly eager to be *anti-Semitic*. There were three women with me: an elderly mother, her two daughters and also a 4-year old grand-daughter, all of them looked haggard and drawn, doom and gloom all around, and I myself was so broke I couldn’t afford a slice of bread and I could help neither them or myself. Their permanent hiding place was the chimney of a stone baking oven. The ladder led to the attic with straw and hay there, and we settled ourselves in the chimney leaning against some protruding bricks. The oven door remained open. We stayed there without food or even a drop of water, until the following evening. The stay was neither peaceful nor comfortable. All the time we were hiding in there had to remain in a standing, or better to say, a suspended position, with the granny being thirsty and the kid hungry. For a few hours they were calmed down only by visits paid by the Nazis, whose jackboot footsteps were loud and clear. They came three times and turned everything upside down. The oven was none of their interest. And the smoke coming from the neighbour’s kitchen kept stinging our eyes. Not only did you have to endure it all yourself, but you also had to keep the others calm.

The Jewish neighbours who knew about this hiding place came and told us at last that the *operation* was over. Aching bones made me spend the night on the floor in a corner. In the morning I made for the *Judenrat*. The Deputy Chairman, a lawyer whose name I don’t know, saw me and promised to send me to *Lvow* at their earliest convenience. I didn’t even ask for some small change to buy a slice of bread. It was impossible to inform my brother that I was still alive. I had only my mother’s wristwatch in my pocket, I had lost my own watch in jumping from the train and I only realised that much later. I left the *Judenrat* office, a modest and dirty place, to wait outside for a car.

Then I learned from a boy that there was a military truck from *Lwow* that was to take back the brother of somebody who had also escaped from the *Lwow* train. After a while a man approached me to ask where I was from and as I told him he talked to the German driver of the truck, who wanted 600 zlotys to give me a lift. I said I would pay the money right after being brought to *Lwow* *ghetto*. After long bargaining the driver agreed to take my mother’s wristwatch in pledge. Later on, he didn’t want to let me take the watch back out of pledge. In a half-ton truck we had to squat all the time so that nobody could see from the outside that we were riding in the truck. And there were six of us. On the way, the oldest asked me who I was. When he heard who I was he was outraged and said I should have told him at the beginning and he would have taken me free of charge. When we arrived at the *Lwow ghetto*, he saw me home and when my brother opened the door, he said to my brother: “*Doctor - You saved my life once. Now I’m bringing your sister back. I am only sorry that the German didn’t want to give her back her watch*” and then he fled.

Meanwhile, some of my brother’s patients whom I had also known for years proposed that as they had assumed management positions in the countryside, they were inclined – naturally, if well compensated - to take us with them. At the same time their sister offered my brother a shelter in her apartment in *Lwow*.

On 15 December I left for ***Hryhorow***, *poviat Rohatyn*, as Olga Barnicz. From then on I had to play the role of a pious Catholic, a teacher, and a sister of the landlord who was Czech by descent. That was a mitigating factor as the village was Ukrainian. I began to go to church in the neighbouring village every Sunday and holiday. The priest made friends with us as we were the only educated people in the area. He thought we were from the *Home Army* hiding to avoid arrest. Nobody wanted to put it right because of me. In May I organised outings in front of the statue of *Mother of God* and at home I dealt with the household and teaching the landlord’s daughter. The landlady often went to *Lwow* and brought me the worst possible information about the fate of the Jewish people there, while her sister who was staying there to recuperate a little, began to mother me. One day she stated that she had dreamed about my mother, whom she knew well, and said that my mother had asked her to take care of me, and due to this dream she regards herself to be my mother from then on and would protect me in every need, offering me her name at the same time. Before long I really needed it as *Kennkarten* (Third Reich IDs) were to be issued in the village and my Baptismal Certificate didn’t match with the name of the people protecting me and who declared me as a member of their family. One night Ukrainians attacked the house and stole all the clothes and documents belonging to the landlord, and I used that as a pretext and testified at the police station that my documents had also been stolen. In this way I was able to obtain a *Kennkarten* with the data I chose myself. Since then I have been **Olga Barniczowa nee Maliszewska**. Due to the increasingly complex situation ………………………..

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[**TRANSLATOR’S NOTE**: One line is indecipherable from copy document provided]

…… they were afraid to take ……………………..[*indecipherable*] …………..their sister who was hiding my brother, and **my brother** too was arrested at her apartment, suspected of activity in the *Home Army*. On the way to *Gestapo* headquarters he took *potassium cyanide*, a poisonous dosage of which he had also supplied to me when we were parting so that I could use it if the need arose. After the war, it was stolen together with my handbag and money at a railway station in *Lodz*.

I had no means of subsistence then, but assisted by the priest I managed to find shelter in a nearby village at his acquaintance’s farm, where I stayed until summer 1943. ……………………………………………….[ *indecipherable*] ………………… . It was a strange coincidence that in the same village a cousin of mine with whom I had spent my childhood with, remained in absolute hiding and this fact I learned of only much later after the war. ( Roza ……….………. , presently in Warsaw).

………………………….[*indecipherable*] ………….. in the new place I dealt with sewing and with treating patients, and anything else to earn a living. My foster mother with her daughter also lived there.

……………………….. [*indecipherable*] ……………. when the situation changed and became unbearable, which occurred after the events in *Rohatyn*, *Stryj* and ………………… , also Poles began to move westward …………………………… . We went with Mrs Maliszewska and her daughter ………………………………………….. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

[**TRANSLATOR’S NOTE**: 7 lines of copy document are indecipherable ] ……………

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I dug potatoes for the so-called *basket money* and I made sweaters, stockings and gloves; I taught children, gave private lessons to high school students preparing for final exams and at the end of 1944 I even wrote letters for an illiterate *soltys* (village administrator). In spite of it I still had to save and ration my own food and I had to be satisfied with bread which I baked once a week. All these earnings were insufficient.

In June 1945 we went t Gdansk, where the rest of the family lived.

I regard it my duty to repay Mrs Maliszewska for everything whe had done for me. I arranged for their apartment so that each of them had a separate room and I supported the elderly lady until I left for *Israel*. Her daughter went to work. Three months after my departure Mrs Maleszewska die. At present I am in contact with her daughter, who treats me like her own sister.

*Signature of Olga Barniczowa*

*A written notation in Hebrew followed by numbers 4 / .. / 3*

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