

BALICKA, Helena  
Poland Documentation Project  
Polish  
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Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Helena Kozłowska (nee Balicka), born in 1920 in Warsaw, describes her family background, her fight against the Nazi occupation of Poland during World War II and her participation in the rescue of Jewish people during the war. Helena was wounded in the last days of the war. Helena's account reveals a picture of life in the Warsaw ghetto and of her involvement with the Jewish resistance against the Nazis. She touches on the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto as well as the Warsaw uprising of 1944. Her narrative sheds light on interactions between Jews and Poles in occupied Warsaw. Her personal involvement in the rescue of **Sarah** (Sara) **Biderman** as well as her friendship with Jewish fighters of the Jewish Fighting Organization "Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa," (ŻOB), resulted in her being awarded the medal of Righteous Among the Nations in 1975. Helena Balicka is one of the founders of the Association for Polish–Israeli Friendship. She writes and gives talks about Israel and Zionism.

[01:] 00:46:00 – [01:] 10:28:25

She begins by explaining she is from a member of a family with a long tradition of participating in social movements; believes that her outlook on the war, politics, and social involvement was strongly influenced by the socialist heritage of her family; says her father, a communist and trained civil engineer, died in 1959; says her mother was a pediatrician, had strong socialist leanings, and died in 1957; notes she was an only child and was born on **Nowowiejska** Street in Warsaw; says she finished high school in 1938, at which time the family lived in the Mokotów district of Warsaw; notes that in September 1939, she helped defend Warsaw, which was under attack by the Nazis; explains she worked with the Stołecznym Komitecie Samopomocy Społecznej, or the Capital Committee of Mutual Assistance, and as a recruiter of volunteers to defend Warsaw; says that during the war she finished a two-year underground, illegal school of architecture and after that she started to study in the underground department of architecture at the University of Warsaw; says she participated in the Warsaw uprising in August 1944, as a member of the People's Army "Armia Ludowa," (AL); explains she was in the Old Town section of Warsaw and later, for about a month, in the midtown section of the city; says when the uprising ended she left Warsaw along with other locals on October 5, 1944, and after a short time in the transit camp of Pruszków, she was able to leave and was liberated near Kraków; explains she lost her hand during a bombing raid which occurred an hour after the Soviet Army liberated the area where she was living; recalls returning to Warsaw in May 1945 after four months in a hospital; says her father was in Auschwitz from 1943, and returned to Warsaw in August 1945; recalls that while she was in high school, there was only one Jewish girl in her class; remembers the girl was the daughter of an associate professor at the University of Warsaw; says the girl's family was not religious and was very assimilated; recalls that in the summer of 1938, she (Balicka) met **Sarah Biderman** during an acceptance test to the school of Architecture; says

**Sarah** was from a Hassidic family and looked very Semitic and scared; says they both failed the exam and that contact was lost with **Sarah** afterwards; says she enrolled in a school to learn the art of drawing, and there she met a group of young Jews who kept to themselves, spoke Yiddish, and were from the Jewish neighborhood of Warsaw; remembers asking them about **Sarah Biderman**, and they explained they knew her, and the two girls reestablished contact just before the war broke out; says **Sarah** was the first person she met who was not completely assimilated; explains that before the war, Helena's family had contacts only with Jews who were assimilated, spoke perfect Polish, and considered themselves Poles; emphasizes **Sarah** was the first person who came from a Yiddish-speaking family and although her spoken Polish was very good, she had a distinct Yiddish accent.

[01:] 10:29:00 – [01:] 20:21:25

She starts to talk about her father, who in the period between World War I and II, lost his job three times due to his political activity: in 1919 he lost his job because of his defense of Jewish students—notes she does not recall the details of that defense; in 1933, he lost his job due to his activities as a Communist, and in 1937 he objected to the introduction of the “*numerus clausus*” (restricted number or quota) policy by the Association of Polish Architects; says she is not clear if the proposal was for the establishment of a “*numerous clausus*” or “*numerous nulus*” (exclusion) policy in regards to the Jewish students; remembers her father and a few friends including **Roman Pietrowski** strongly objecting to this policy; says her father uttered the famous “I am ashamed of being Polish...”; explains this incident was discussed in the Jewish press and in the press of the rightwing National Democratic Party; says after losing his job because of the statement, he was visited by an architect (**Jankowska**), who on behalf of a rich industrialist, **Felix Wiśnicki**, offered him a job to rebuild **Wiśnicki's** artificial silk factory, which he accepted; says after about a year the owner offered her father a very interesting job of building a factory for manufacturing cellulose; mentions that **Sarah** lived about two miles from her house, but when the war broke out, she completely lost contact with **Sarah**; says she was not sure if she survived the bombings or if she escaped to the Russian side, east of the Bug River; says **Sarah** showed up at Balicka's house in March 1940, a few days before the “*little ghetto*” was closed; says at that time **Sarah** wore an armband; remembers that the persecution of Jews started before the ghetto was formed in Warsaw; recalls watching the cutting of beards which was an early method for humiliation of the Jews; says the first time she saw it, it involved an older Jewish man who was surrounded by a circle of German officers, and around them was a larger circle of gawkers; says the man stood quietly while the Germans laughed as his beard was being cut; notes that because of her background and awareness of the political situation, she was not surprised by the events that occurred in Poland after the invasion; says the persecution of Jews and Poles was not surprising to her; mentions that initially, none of their assimilated Jewish friends chose to go into the ghetto when it was formed; says **Sarah's** visit to her apartment in **Mokotów** was a complete surprise; says at the time, she did not know if **Sarah** was alive; says that **Sarah** described the situation in the ghetto as very difficult, and that the visit lasted for about an hour; notes that Jewish people who looked Semitic or who had a Yiddish accent when speaking Polish had very little chance of surviving in the “*Aryan*” world outside the ghetto; says essentially they were forced to stay in the ghetto, but she entered the ghetto a few times and visited **Sarah** just once because she lived very far inside the ghetto, and at the time they were not very close friends; explains she would enter the ghetto to visit her friends from primary school, one of which was

**Marysia Hirszfeld**; says she entered the ghetto at **Chlodna** Street because it was the area where the ghetto was quite narrow; says the guards let her enter the ghetto under the pretext that she needed to cross it to get to the other side in shortest time; says she used to spend a few hours during each visit to her friends whom she knew from primary school.

[01:] 20:22:00 – [01:] 30:37:25

She recollects that during one of her visits to the ghetto, she saw a big yard that was formed by tearing up the pavement of the street and using the soil to plant carrots and potatoes; notes it was a common sight in the ghetto; says there were several means of getting the information from inside the ghetto; explains one of her friends had a daily pass to the ghetto, and he was a source of some information; says another friend had also passes to get into the ghetto: she was a member of Young People's Fighting Union "Związek Walki Młodzieży," (ZWM), and was in the process of establishing contacts inside the ghetto; says that in addition, the leftist newspaper *Biuletyn Informacyjny* (Information Bulletin) also frequently reported on ghetto life; says she was able to observe life in the ghetto while driving through it; says the children were so emaciated they did not resemble human beings; says the situation of the **Hirszfeld** and **Cwajbaum** families was initially not too bad: they lived in cramped conditions but had sufficient food; explains the **Cwajbaum** and **Hirszfeld** families received certificates of conversion from Father **Godlewski** and shared an apartment with other families of Jewish converts; notes their standard of living was worse than her own family and that everybody's standard of living was significantly worse than before the war; says Father **Godlewski** was about 70 years old when war broke out, and was a known antisemite before the war; says it is known that he attempted to save a young Jewish girl during the war, but the girl's father refused to give his daughter to him and be placed in a convent; laments that both the little girl and her mother perished in Treblinka; says it became known that many Jewish children placed in convents by Father **Godlewski** survived the war; tells of a Polish friend who after the war declared that he hated Jews, however, he had saved two small Jewish children because he felt that it was a "Christian obligation" to do so; describes her visit to see **Sarah** in the ghetto; she describes hearing screams and seeing crowds of people: they were dirty and bent over, some were rushing, others stood still trying to sell things that nobody seemed to need: a few matches, a few shoestrings; says she watched children peddling useless things; says parents of these children believed that passersby would have more pity on children than on adults and would buy something.

[01:] 30:38:00 – [01:] 37:38:25

She begins to explain that while walking through the ghetto with a friend to see **Sarah** in the summer of 1941, she saw buildings whose windows were covered by bars, hundreds of hands sticking out from these barred windows, and heard screams of people begging for food, for help; says her friend explained that these buildings held people who were chased from the areas around Warsaw into its ghetto; says these people had no belongings and their living conditions were horrible: there were no functioning toilets, they slept on the floors, many died of typhoid, and were fed a watery soup twice a day; says that because of rampant diseases, the death rate was very high, so they were all quarantined in order to keep safe the rest of the ghetto population; says while walking through the ghetto, she saw dead bodies and people who were dying on the sidewalks; remembers seeing children whose skin was wrinkled, legs and arms

looking like sticks, were black from dirt, and did not resemble human beings; says she reached **Sarah**'s house on **Pawia** Street; says **Sarah** lived in a large, filthy building and her whole family lived in one room; says they spoke in the hallway of the building, and it continued while **Sarah** accompanied Balicka to the exit gate from the ghetto; says she found out that **Sarah** still was trying to take classes of architectural drawing and kept asking Balicka about the political situation outside the ghetto; says she wanted to know what was happening on the "Aryan" side and when the war was going to end; notes the visit was relatively short; remembers that the next time they met was in November 1942; says she received a postcard from **Sarah** saying that she was still alive and if Balicka wanted to see her, she should come to the **Czerniaków** farm at 8 p.m. on a specific day; says she brought food and clothing and traveled to the farm; says she arrived at night and was told by someone that Jews stayed in the barracks behind the farmhouse; remembers overhearing conversations in Yiddish and opened a door to one of the barracks.

## TAPE 2

[02:] 00:41:00 – [02:] 11:29:25

She entered a room and was surprised to see a group of Jews who were not guarded by anyone; says the barracks were surrounded by a low fence and an open gate; notes this was a few months after the ghetto was liquidated; says she met **Sarah**, and the two were talking about the events that took place during the liquidation of the ghetto; says she had only a short time to talk to **Sarah** because of the approaching curfew; recalls how she and others helped their friends escape from the ghetto; says among those who helped in organizing the escapes was **Ala Cwajbaum**, the daughter of the assistant professor at the University of Warsaw; says since **Ala** was on the "Aryan" side before the liquidation, she helped in evacuating some of her friends; says she (Balicka) and others observed that the gate of the ghetto at the location of the courthouse was open; says by phone, **Ala** contacted her brother, the **Hirszfeld** family and others to help them leave the ghetto; says the **Hirszfeld** family went to stay with Balicka's family; says she could not communicate with **Sarah** because she lived deep in the ghetto and unlike the **Cwajbaums** did not have a telephone; says at the time of the liquidation, Balicka believed that **Sarah** had perished; remembers she was happy when she received a postcard from **Sarah** asking her to meet at the **Czerniaków** farm; says that in talking to **Sarah**, she found out that **Sarah**'s family was killed but **Sarah** survived by a series of lucky events; notes it was possible that belonging to the Zionist organization, Dror, and communicating with others helped **Sarah** to survive; says **Sarah** was able to escape from the "Umschlagplatz" (collection or transit point) and once was able to run away from a gendarme whom she kicked down a staircase; says **Sarah** and a group of her friends, who were organized, were able to get work on the **Czerniaków** farm; estimates that perhaps up to one hundred young Jews were working on that farm; says the conditions on the farm were very bad: there was hunger, and they had to wash themselves in a lake during a very cold November; remembers asking the group why they were not running away since only an old Volksdeutscher (ethnic German living in Poland) was watching them; says **Sarah** explained that some people tried to escape but did not know where to go: they did not have addresses in Warsaw or addresses where they could find the partisans; says **Sarah** also noted that many in the group spoke Polish with a heavy Yiddish accent, some did not speak Polish at all; says those who spoke good Polish looked very Semitic; says some who escaped were caught by the Germans;

notes **Sarah** tried to escape but ended up returning to the farm; notes that when she (Balicka) listened to these explanations, she realized for the first time how difficult the situation of the Jews in the Polish society was—she understood how the two societies that lived together in Poland were essentially isolated for over 1,000 years; says only those who were completely assimilated and did not look Semitic had a chance of escaping; says some of Balicka's family's Jewish friends, who were assimilated, stayed at her apartment for weeks or months; notes that during the encounter at the **Czerniaków** farm, she told **Sarah** that she could not take her to her apartment since she already was hiding another Jewish girl, **Hanka Szapirówna Sawicka**, from the ghetto; says **Hanka** used to come periodically to stay for a few nights; notes she visited **Sarah** on the **Czerniaków** farm one more time in December of 1941 and found the barracks on the farm completely empty; says the farmer told her that the whole group was taken out, but he did not know where; says she accidentally found out from one of her assimilated Jewish coworkers at the architectural firm that the group from the **Czerniaków** farm was moved to a subcamp that was similar to the camps that held Soviet prisoners of war; notes the conditions in those camps were terrible; says the Soviet prisoners were kept in camps where there were no barracks—they were completely exposed to the elements, even in the winter; says she knew about these conditions because she and her father met Soviet soldiers, who after escaping from these subcamps, were hiding in safe houses on the "Aryan" side in Warsaw; says she and her father used to see these soldiers and photograph them for their fake identification documents; says there were about 150 escaped Soviet prisoners in Warsaw at the time, and they were all made members of the underground AL; says she was told that all members of the group from **Czerniaków** farm starved to death in one of the subcamps and lost all contact with **Sarah**.

[02:] 11:30:00 – [02:] 19:53:25

Helena notes that at various times and for different lengths of time, her parent's apartment was a hideout for many Jewish people who were friends of the family, one of which was **Bernard Szapiro**, the father of **Hanka Szapiro Sawicka**; notes in his falsified documents he was known as **Bolesław Sadowski**; says he would meet his daughter at Balicka's apartment every Wednesday; says Hanka used to frequently stay overnight at the apartment; says in August 1942, Mr. **Szapiro** showed up with a high fever, which turned out to be caused by typhoid and **Hanka** spent many days nursing her father; says in addition to **Hanka** and her father, **Kazik Cwajbaum** who in his false documents was listed as **W. Zakrzewski**, also stayed at the same time at Helena's apartment; says when Mr. **Szapiro** died, the family had to take care of the burial, which in itself was a complication for the Balicka family; says at some point, **Hanka** was arrested and died soon after that, and after **Hanka's** death, the family was visited by a few snoops who wanted to get involved in some conspiracy; says the family was very uncomfortable with the situation and decided for safety reasons to send her (Helena) out of town; says she stayed a few weeks with some friends in Dęblin; clarifies that as a member of ZWM she was automatically counted as a member of AL; says in spring of 1943 a young man showed up at her apartment with a letter from **Sarah**; says **Sarah** asked for her help to obtain false identification papers, regardless of the cost; notes that around Easter time, **Frania Razmus**, a member of ŻOB, showed up at her apartment with pictures of **Sarah** and money to obtain false identification documents, but at that time she was at her friend's house in Dęblin; says the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto occurred during that period; says she returned home hoping to meet **Sarah**, but **Sarah** did not show up; says everyone in Balicka's family agonized about the events that were

taking place in the ghetto; says at that time she worked in Żolibórz and during her commute to and from work, she would pass the infamous carousel at the Krasinski Square; says on one occasion she witnessed an open sewer entrance surrounded by Poles who explained they were setting up a trap for the Jews who might try to escape through this opening; remembers the trap consisted of suspended grenades which would explode and kill anyone if they tried to get out of the sewer; remembers feeling helpless against the group of Poles; recalls it was a similar helplessness that she felt when witnessing the cutting of the beard of the old Jew by the German soldiers; recollects that 15 months later she herself used that sewer entrance to save her own life; says during that time, she did not have any contacts with **Sarah** or members of ŻOB; says in May of 1943, her mother told her that **Sarah** was in the apartment asleep and utterly exhausted; says she was infected with lice and generally in very bad shape; says **Sarah** spent 18 hours in the sewers, then spent ten days walking through the woods without much food or being able to wash up; says she later found out that **Sarah** escaped the ghetto with a group of 40 people who were the first group to leave the ghetto with the help of Polish Workers Party "Polska Partia Robotnicza," (PPR); says they were transported by a truck to a secret location in the woods near the village of Łomianki; says they were to be picked up by another truck, but it never came; says the group was stuck in the woods without food or water, but did have weapons given to them by the PPR; says they were very careful approaching the wells for water because barking dogs could reveal them; says they bought bread but could not buy enough for the large group without raising suspicion from local farmers; says a peasant helped them by bringing them some bread and water, but he too could not bring enough for the whole group.

[02:] 19:54:00 – [02:] 31:02:25

She notes that since the group did not have any direction or addresses to go to, **Sarah** decided to leave the group and walk to Helena's apartment; says she walked barefoot because her shoes were destroyed during her walks in the sewers; says at the time of **Sarah**'s arrival, Helena was working with some liaisons and members of ŻOB; notes she frequently saw **Frania**, **Kazik Rathaizer** and others; says **Kazik** was telling her about his searching for bunkers and sewers where Jews were hiding and that he was trying to get them out to the "Aryan" side of the city; says **Sarah** stayed at Helena's apartment for about two months; indicates **Sarah** was hard to control during that time and was taking unnecessary risks: she would leave without having documents on registered domicile, and she ignored all rules for being inconspicuous; notes that the family's safety was being jeopardized by **Sarah**'s behavior, and that they were afraid of the neighbors; says some of them were trying to force Helen's family to stop accepting and feeding Jewish kids, and that there were very serious threats and pressure building up on Helena's family; indicates that at some point, **Sarah** moved to a safe house owned by ŻOB in Lębortów; notes that apparently, that was the place where **Sarah** was shot and wounded by a gendarme; says the circumstance under which she was shot was not clear: that day, **Sarah** showed up at the door of Helena's apartment, looking very weak and propped up in the door; says she whispered to Helena "a gendarme shot me," and Helena took **Sarah** to the bathroom to wash her up and saw that **Sarah** had a bullet entry hole near her belly button and an exit hole in her back; notes the holes were about the size of a finger; says **Sarah** survived the 12-hour ordeal after the shooting because the blood around her wound dried out, and since the holes were covered by her dress it helped to stop the bleeding; says **Sarah**'s body was covered by a belt of dried out blood, and that **Sarah** explained that she passed out after the shooting, and when she came to, she was

able to crawl to a nearby puddle and drink water; says she spent almost the whole night drinking water, and was able to walk about four kilometers to the last stop of the street cars; says she took two street cars to cross Warsaw, without documents or tickets was able to arrive at Helena's apartment; says after **Sarah** showed up at the apartment, Helena called her father to return home from work to help her deal with **Sarah** as well as Dr. **Jurewicz** under the pretext that Helena's mother had an attack of appendicitis; says after about an hour the doctor showed up in the apartment and when he found out that there was no appendicitis case, he asked if the sick person was the one that was shot and wounded; says that he explained that he was searched and checked out when he got off the street car on the way to Helena's apartment; notes Helena's father was for some reason detained by the gendarmes; says the doctor was concerned that Helena's apartment could be searched at any time; says after examining **Sarah**, he said that because of her condition, she had to be operated on immediately, but that she may not survive the surgery since the shooting took place about 14 hours earlier; says he urged them to take her to the hospital because he was worried that the Gestapo would show up at any time in their apartment; says that for her, this was the most memorable day in the whole period of the war; believes that the reason for it was that the outcome of events on that day depended solely on her decisions—**Sarah's** life depended on her decisions and actions; remembers deciding to go to a Polish hospital in Płock where the family knew a young doctor; says she met the doctor as he was leaving the hospital and he told her to bring **Sarah** to the hospital and that since **Sarah's** documents were missing, he suggested that she say they found **Sarah** lying on the street; says he also insisted that Helena's family name should not be mentioned under any circumstance at the hospital; says on the way home to get **Sarah**, Helena stopped to visit a group of wealthy friends of the family to ask them for money for the anticipated expenses, which they gave without any hesitation; says she ran home quickly to get **Sarah** to the hospital.

[02:] 31:03:00 – [02:] 40:34:25

Balicka says her mother found friends to help take **Sarah** to the hospital; says **Sarah** was dressed and a horse-driven carriage was ordered; says when the driver realized that he was going to transport a wounded person, he unfolded the carriage top despite the fact that it was a sunny day, because he did not want people to see who was being transported; remembers there were problems with registering **Sarah** in the hospital since not everyone was alerted; notes the surgery was very difficult; says her friend, Dr. **Jurewicz** later mentioned that many surgeons in Warsaw were commenting on **Sarah's** difficult yet successful operation; laments that **Sarah's** behavior in the hospital was very irresponsible: she drank water despite doctor's orders against doing so, when she was delirious she spoke Yiddish, and when she was conscious she was telling everyone Helena's telephone number and her last name; says this was against all rules of secrecy and put the whole family in danger; says a few weeks after **Sarah** left the hospital, someone announced the operation to the Germans, and the majority of the doctors in the hospital were arrested and sent to Auschwitz—most perished there; says that after the war, Helena spoke to one of the surviving doctors, Dr. **Tetmajer**, who told her that until the incident with **Sarah**, the hospital was routinely treating wounded partisans and wounded escaped Jews, without trouble, despite the fact that wounded patients had to be reported to the Germans; says after **Sarah** was released she stayed with Helena, her mother, and an aunt; says she and her mother worried about an investigation by the Germans, and they tried to find and destroy anything in their apartment that would indicate their role in saving Jews and helping the underground; says among the items they

found was a Jewish armband; says at that time she did not have any addresses for safe houses and also lost all contact with ŻOB, but hoped someone from ŻOB would call and ask about **Kryisia** which was the name that **Sarah** used on her false documents; says an aunt who did not know **Sarah** has received a call asking about **Kryisia**, and told the caller there was nobody by that name and to stop calling; says she and her mother were desperate because they feared a visit by the Germans; remembers **Irka**, a ŻOB liaison, calling and took **Sarah** away to a safe house on 5 **Pańska** Street; says a friend, **Kazik**, periodically called to report that **Sarah**'s health was slowly improving; says the next time Helena met **Sarah** was during the Warsaw uprising in 1944; mentions that **Frania Beatus** and **Kazik Rathaiser** were excellent liaison agents since they did not look like Jews, spoke excellent Polish and had typical mannerism of Polish youth; *[there is a gap in recording]* says she was in touch with **Kazik Rathaiser**, **Frania Beatus** and **Lea Hamersztajn**; notes that on August 7, 1944, she was in the Old Town section of Warsaw when she heard someone calling her name; says she saw **Sarah** with a group of young people; says **Sarah** explained that she and the group joined the AL since they were turned down by the Home Army "Armia Krajowa," (AK); says she told her that she too was turned down by the AK and also decided to join AL; says at that time, there were many volunteers who wanted to join in the uprising; says one of the group representatives named **Antek** reported that they were accepted by the AL and assigned to the Third Battalion, and Helena was assigned to the Fourth Battalion; remembers getting to know members of **Sarah**'s group; **Antek**, **Zivia**, **Marek**, **Tuvia**, **Stefan Grajek**, **Zygmunt Warman**, **Marysia Warmanowa**, and others; says they were quartered in relative proximity to each other: Helena was stationed at 16 **Freta** Street, while **Sarah** and the others were at **Świętojerska** Street; explains this was a memorable time in her life, and in free time she and **Zivia** discussed Zionism and Palestine, all while in the middle of an uprising in Warsaw.

[02:] 40:35:00 – [02:] 51:40:25

She explains that talks with **Zivia** were very important to her; says up until those discussions she believed that the "Jewish problem" could only be solved by complete assimilation of Jews into Polish society; says she believed that the example of Western societies was proof of her correct thinking about the subject and acknowledges that the assimilation process would be very long; says she believed that the Jewish religion was keeping Jews from progress and also created a big schism between Jews and Poles; says she believed that progress could be made if Jews were willing to adapt the Western model—that is, they could retain their religious practices while trying strongly to assimilate into the Polish society; recognizes that she did not agree with the Zionist movement, believing Zionism was a nice idea but did not think that it was practical; says she did not believe that one can build a country among the sea of Arabs, in an area where the imperialist countries were competing against each other, where the land was barren, while there was lack of major financial resources; says she heard about the Jewish pioneer movement (halutzim); says **Zivia** told her that in Palestine the pioneers used to drain swamps and recover land for farming and organized kibbutzim (cooperatives); says she and **Zivia** had long discussions about Zionism and its history; notes that years later when she wrote a book of her memoirs which contained a section about Zionism, the editor of the publishing house (the Ministry of National Defense), Mrs. Wichowa, requested that Helena modify that specific section because Mrs. Wichowa did not like the positive thoughts that Helena conveyed about Zionism; says she refused the editor's suggestions and the book was eventually published as



originally written; says at the time of the Warsaw uprising, Helena again lost contact with **Sarah**, but believes that she and a few other fighters including **Kazik** went to their base in Leszno and were cut off by the fighting; says her group and some of the ŻOB fighters were supposed to be evacuated to Żolibórz where they were to join other AL units; remembers being evacuated with about 300 people through the sewers between the Old Town and Żolibórz; says they had to turn back because the sewage level was very high, reaching their chins; notes that some sick and wounded people drowned during the evacuation and that only she and about 50 others were forced to return; says she lost contact with **Sarah** and many others; remembers recuperating from the surgery of her arm amputation at the Kraków hospital and receiving a postcard from her aunt telling her that **Sarah** had returned from Germany and intended to visit her in the hospital; recalls seeing **Sarah** a few times after the war; recollects a special event when she spent a night at a kibbutz on **Poznańska** Street: she and **Sarah**'s friends were having dinner when suddenly **Antek** showed up in the doorway, standing silent and soon the whole room was silent; says he announced that Germany signed the surrender documents; notes everyone in the room said the same thing—"it is too late"; remembers seeing **Sarah** a few more times, and recalling **Sarah** wanting to go to Palestine because Poland was one big cemetery of the Jews and she wanted to be with her friends; says she warned **Sarah** about the difficulties, the harsh climate, and **Sarah**'s weak physical condition; remembers visiting **Sarah** in a Łódź Kibbutz and seeing a play at Ida Kaminska's theater; says **Sarah** disappeared after Łódź and the next time she heard about **Sarah** was in a letter sent in November of 1946 from kibbutz Yagur in Palestine; recalls the letter was written jointly with **Zivia**, and they wrote that they had been to Czechoslovakia, Germany, and Italy before arriving to Palestine, as well as talking about life in the kibbutz; notes that afterwards **Sarah** infrequently wrote short letters; notes that her friend **Władysław Bartoszewski** traveled to Israel in the early 1960s and Helena asked him to visit **Sarah** in Kibbutz Lohamei HaGhetat; says he did visit and reported to Helena that **Sarah** was not successful in her personal or professional life: she never married, did not finish her studies, suffered from schizophrenia, became angry with **Zivia** and **Antek**, and disliked her life in the kibbutz and eventually was removed by the kibbutz to an apartment in Tel Aviv; says she used to receive a few letters from **Sarah** who in them, complained about her hard life and poverty; notes she has never seen **Sarah** again and that **Sarah** died about 10 years before the time of this interview; says she visited Israel in 1985 and 1988, and maintained correspondence with **Zivia**; says around 1967 it was necessary to use subterfuge to correspond with Israel; says she would give letters to her friends who traveled to Western countries with the request that they mail her letters to Israel; says that by 1985, both **Antek** and **Zivia** had died; indicates that through contacts via **Kazik**, she established a contact with the Israeli ambassador to Poland; says she and the ambassador visited each other openly; recalls the Polish secret police meeting with her a few times to ask about these visits; says she agreed to stop contact as long as the police would not interfere with her contact with her Israeli friends, which they agreed.

[02:] 51:41:00 – [02:] 55:50:00

She says that in 1975 she received the medal of Righteous Among the Nations from Yad Vashem; believes **Kazik** nominated her for this award, and he spoke at the event; says that thanks to her contacts with the members of ŻOB during the war, she became interested in the Zionist movement and in Israel; says that her writings about Israel and the kibbutz phenomenon were based on her contacts, discussions, and interactions with the members of ŻOB during the

war; says she wrote five papers, a book, and gave many talks about Israel; says she is one of the founders of the Association for Polish-Israeli Friendship; says among friends, she is known as the expert on the subject of kibbutz; notes that after the war she received a degree from the Główną Szkołę Handlową (Business Academy) and worked at a university; notes she was fired from the university in 1968 for publicly punching a female secret agent who was distorting her words and berating her students; says after she was fired, she was unemployed for almost five years; says when she was working, she specialized and lectured about social politics, rehabilitation of disabled persons and on social gerontology; notes that in the last few years she wrote extensively on the subject of Jews and Israel.

Time coded notes provided by Sam Ponczak