

## **RG-50.462.0351**

### **Summary**

Maria Kozdrowicz (née Liebesmann) was born in the year 1915 in Poland. She was raised in a traditional but assimilated Jewish family. She had three older brothers. Her father was employed in the wood-working industry. Before the war she studied chemistry for two years at the university and was married to the railway engineer Arthur Backs (or Baks).

When the Germans came in 1939, she, her son (Jershe Janosch Kozdrowicz) and her mother fled to Chelm (a Polish city near Lublin and the Ukrainian border). Her husband went to Radom (also a Polish city 60 miles south of Warsaw) together with his mother and worked as an accountant for the Polish committee there.

She is talking about some Polish, Ukrainian and even German people who helped them to survive. There was the Polish woman who helped her to flee to Chelm and to find a job and an apartment there. But most of all the family was helped by a Ukrainian lawyer, Dr. Uschetzky. He gave her and her family false documents and a new family name. During war they have been the Polish family Kozdrowicz, so no one could consider that they were Jewish. They even kept the name after the war, because that was the name with whom they survived. The Ukrainian lawyer also helped her husband and his family to survive. He did not want any money for that. After the war Maria and her husband helped him to be a lawyer in Poland again.

She also talks about the store she was working at in Chelm. It belonged to a German company called Kaiser from Hamburg in Germany. Her boss was also from Hamburg and a member of the Nazi Party. She remembers him always being kind to her. Although some of her customers suspected her to be Jewish most of them covered her. One time, at a Gestapo event, one of her Polish colleagues publicly said that Maria could be Jewish. One Gestapo officer, who knew Maria from the store, denied it with a vehement no. He even lied about knowing her and her family from her hometown.

She stayed in Chelm until the Russian army arrived, although she got warned to leave the town, because people suspected her to be Jewish. But she was convinced to be even more suspicious if she would have left the town. Once she got so afraid, that she sent her son to her husband for four months.

Her husband once almost got deported, while she was already in Chelm, but he was able to jump of the train and could flee. He was picked up from the Ukrainian lawyer who brought him to Radom, where he survived the war.

Her sister in law was saved by an influential German from Vienna who hired her as a housekeeper and hid her. He later even took the rest of her family and hid them too. Her brother who was a doctor and a Polish officer was saved with his family, by a German policeman. After the war the policeman went to trial in Salzburg and her brother had to come too. He did not speak for him, because the policeman only saved the Jewish family so he can use the medical support of Maria's brother. He also killed some Jewish people. Maria's cousin helped some Jewish people with false documents. When he got a lot of

money from his aunt, who was leaving the country, he gave it to the people in the Ghetto Rejowiec.

One day a young Ukrainian officer, who worked for the Germans in the Ghetto, came to Maria in the store and told her that they shot 12000 Jews on one day in a camp. When she asked him, if he shot too, he swore he only had shot in the air.

Also Maria helped some customers in the store, if she suspected them to be Jewish and gave them some extra food.