



Martin's Story, Chapter 6

Our relations, whom I had never actually met before but my mother had, they made us welcome and they allowed us to stay as long as we needed to but of course we were not welcome so far as the authorities were concerned. They considered us to be illegal immigrants, we'd entered the country without permission, although legally we were Polish citizens there was a great deal of anti-Semitism in Poland both in official circles and in unofficial circles, so of course they blamed us for entering the country although we'd had no choice about it at all. And so we were not at all welcomed by officialdom and we had to stay within the Jewish area because there was so much anti-Semitism outside it and also because of course the resentment, which was against Jews in general, was particularly against people like us who had entered the country without permission as far as the authorities were concerned.

How long we stayed, I must demolish the idea that all Jews are rich. Some people think that being Jewish and being very rich are the same thing (laughs). Well I assure you they're not. And in Poland many of the Jews including all my relations belonged to the Hasidic form of Judaism, that is the extremely orthodox which I now experienced, not quite for the first time because my grandparents had also been Hasidic, but Hasidic Jews give up their lives to religious observance and religious study. And in a Hasidic household in Poland usually only one member of the household earned a living for the whole family and it was a pretty meagre living at that. And even that member spent as much of his time as possible on religious study and religious observance and the other male members spent all their time on that, female members spent again as much time as possible on religious observance but of course did the household tasks when they were not studying. And this was the lifestyle of people like that. And poverty was to them a natural way of life because they considered it was wrong to spend the time that could be spent on religious observance and study on the process of earning money more than one needed for one's immediate purposes.

And so we stayed with my relations as long as we had to then we found somewhere else to stay, a single room which was all we could manage, and we stayed there for a while. Now we were in Krakow for about 8 months, just under 8 months, and then we moved to Brzesko.