

POLAND 1945

JANUARY 1945

I will buy wall maps: Poland under the Piast dynasty, the Polish Commonwealth in 1771, Orbis terrarium antiqui.

—*Rzeczpospolita*, Jan. 1, 1945

On January 3, 4, and 5 the Polish Army Theatre is again performing *The Wedding* by Stanisław Wyspiański after the interruption caused by Miss Kossobudzka's illness.

—*Rzeczpospolita*, Jan. 4, 1945

Warsaw is free!

—*Życie Warszawy*, Jan. 17, 1945

The City Commandant announces that on January 18 it is permitted to remain outdoors until 10 p.m. due to the liberation of Warsaw.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Jan. 18, 1945

Journalists (columnists, reporters, technical personnel) as well as persons with skills and a passion for journalism will be hired. Apply at Administration, *Życie Warszawy*, 194 Grochowska Street.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Jan. 21, 1945

We will base our Western border on the Oder and the Neisse.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Jan. 22, 1945

Halina Hanczke-Świder is searching for Zofia Kozłowska, age 57, residing at 11 Słupecka

Street, and Tadeusz Hanczke, a surveyor, age 37, residing at 62 Filtrowa Street.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Jan. 23, 1945

I announce that the Municipal Abbatoirs are now open, specifically, at 1/2 Sierakowski Street where calves, sheep, goats, and pigs are slaughtered and at 48 Grenadierów Street, where horses are slaughtered. Unregistered slaughter is strictly forbidden and punishable by law.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Jan. 23, 1945

In Warsaw the first teahouse has been opened in the courtyard of the demolished building at 71 Marszałkowska Street.

—*Rzeczpospolita*, Jan. 24, 1945

I am searching for two seven-year-old girls, Jolanta Zielińska and Krystyna Zielińska, who had resided at 44 Grójecka Street before the events and were later sent to the Pruszków Transit Camp. They vanished without a trace. Leave a message at 44 Grójecka Street, Warsaw."

—*Życie Warszawy*, Jan. 24, 1945

Today, on Jan. 25 at 4 p.m., Wanda Wasilewska will deliver a speech on Polish Radio.

—*Rzeczpospolita*, Jan. 25, 1945

Frozen potatoes can be consumed. They only have to be peeled and blanched with

hot water. As a result, they will lose their sweetish flavor. Holders of category V coupons may stock up on frozen potatoes. District Food Supply Offices.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Jan. 26, 1945

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Proprietors of all tailor shops, registered and unregistered, who are not working for the army, are called on to report before Jan. 31 at the Industrial Department, Light Industry Section, at 306 Grochowska Street, room 9, in order to sign their contracts for military orders.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Jan. 30, 1945

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The Polish Teachers' Association asks to be notified about vacant rooms for its members who lost their only homes due to wartime events.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Jan. 30, 1945



Figure 1.1. Riverfront, a Polish city. 1945. PAP (Polish Press Agency).

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Remembering

My grandmother who was born in 1926 doesn't remember the end of the war.

"But how is this possible?" I'm surprised. "You don't remember how that sailor was kissing a nurse in Times Square?" I was born in 1972.

"My child," Grandma gives me a pitying look. "That was the *American* end of the war, in August 1945."

"But perhaps you remember fireworks in Warsaw on May 9? In the ruins of the Central Railway Station, the Soviets shot up the skies from the gun tractors of their 155 mm howitzers."

"Come on," says Grandma, "You know very well that I was not in Warsaw at that time."

On May 7, 1945, she certainly wasn't in Reims either, where Germans signed the act of surrender for the first time. Nor was she in Berlin a day later, where at the demand of Joseph Stalin they signed it again. She couldn't see the French representative General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny threatening to kill himself in the headquarters of Marshal Georgy Zhukov. The Americans, Russians, and British hadn't agreed to his signature on the act of surrender. Finally, after numerous hours of negotiations, they gave in. In Germany it was almost midnight on May 8. In Moscow it was already May 9, 1945.

“But you must remember the end of the war somehow.” I don’t give up: “I would remember.”

Grandma searches her memory. Yes, now she remembers. It was in Weinsberg, in a transit camp surrounded by vineyards, designed for foreigners and protected by Americans. She ended up there after she had escaped from a labor camp in Mannheim, where for several years she made ammunition and spare tractor parts for the Germans.

“We were waiting for that day, though in fact we had been liberated for weeks,” Grandma reminisces. “I remember standing on a huge square in a crowd of boys and girls—Poles, Lithuanians, Czechs, French, and others. Someone shouted, ‘The war has ended right this moment! They signed!’ We started to shout, soldiers were firing a salute, and we were kissing one another at random.”

“You too, Grandma?”

“What do you think?” she asks. “When it’s the end of the war, you don’t care if someone is Polish, Russian, or American. You just kiss everyone.”

My grandmother spent the entire year of 1945 and half the next one in Germany.

“Don’t go back. The Communists will send you to Siberia right away,” said the emissaries of the London government to scare the former forced laborers.

“Come back, we need your hands, we have to rebuild the country,” said the envoys of the Polish government to convince them.

“Did you want to return?” I ask Grandma. “Did you know that Poland had changed shape? That your mother was transferred from Lwów to Gdańsk? Did you get the news that the Germans had to move to the West? Did you hear that Warsaw was turned into ruins?”

“I knew a little bit. My mama and I exchanged letters,” she says. “And I was not going back. In Weinsberg I married your grandfather, whom I had met in a camp near Mannheim. Then I had a baby. We were planning to emigrate to Canada; my family was there.”

But Grandma’s baby died of meningitis, and after that nothing mattered to her. She was not afraid of anything—Communists, Siberia, ruins, or repatriation. She decided to go back to her mother, so one day she and Grandpa took a train to the new Poland. From Germany they brought a jar of candies and a little mutt. Grandma had taken pity on him after American soldiers had attached an Iron Cross to his neck and chased him through the streets of a German town.

Finally, in September 1946 my grandparents arrived in Gdańsk and knocked at the door of her old house on Bitwa Oliwska Street. The door was opened by Stefania, my great-grandmother, after whom I got my middle name. I'm curious.

“Do you remember what she said when she saw you?”

“She said nothing,” says Grandma.

“You don't remember?” I ask.

“I remember very well. My mother began to cry. ‘Why did you come back here, my child? What for?’ She wept. ‘It is horrible in this Poland.’”

FEBRUARY 1945

General Włodzimierz Nałęcz Gembicki is searching for his sister-in-law Maria Nałęcz Gembicka and her daughter Basia. Address: Sokołów Podlaski.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 2, 1945

The Jewish Community of Warsaw announces that its activity in Warsaw has been resumed at a new office at 41 Targowa Street.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 2, 1945

Bathroom mirrors, pocket mirrors. Wholesale. Granica Glassworks, 105 Grochowska Street.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 2, 1945

The management of the clubhouse of the 24th District Civic Committee at 20 Piotr Skarga Street informs the residents of Targówek that the new clubhouse hosts a library. We are open every day and you can join anytime.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 3, 1945

I will sell white and red cloth suitable for national flags. Information at 18 Kawęczynska Street.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 3, 1945

Attorney will buy judicial robes, copies of the civil code, and will rent a typewriter. 17 Wileńska Street.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 4, 1945

The Administration of Post and Telegraphs is appealing to everyone to return furniture, equipment, and other office items illegally taken from its pillaged buildings at Warszawska Street and other places.

—*Dziennik Polski*, Feb. 6, 1945

I will sell a large quantity of shoe polish. I am looking for a business partner. Information: 60 Kawcza Street.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 6, 1945

I inform my parents Anna and Stanisław Orlikowski, residing in Włoszczowa at 21 Sienkiewicz Street, that we are alive. We are waiting, come get us. Marta Świdorska, Warsaw-Praga, 6 Białostocka Street.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 6, 1945

Ms. Grottowa is looking for her son, his name is Wiesław Grott, and he was one year and five months old when on August 7, 1944, on Chłodna Street, a German snatched him from his father and handed him to a stranger. Light hair, black eyes, dressed in two undershirts, a shirt with blue and white stripes, a navy blue sweater, long white underwear, a white coat, and a blue cap with a white rim. Praga, 51 Radzymińska Street, Władysława Grott.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 7, 1945

The Food Rationing Department announces that it will be issuing a hundred grams of

butter priced at 16,50 zlotys per kilo to any one holding extra coupons for children. The butter will be provided in installments, subject to new deliveries. The present supplies are enough for about eight thousand children.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 8, 1945

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A brochure describing the trial of the Majdanek Camp criminals will be published soon in 150,000 copies. The trial took place in November last year in Lublin.

—*Dziennik Polski*, Krakow, Feb. 12, 1945

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Polish Radio is about to begin special broadcasts for families searching for relatives. Submissions free, Polish Radio, 63 Targowa Street. All announcements submitted to Polish Radio are free of charge.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 15, 1945

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On January 5, 1945 a green rucksack was lost on the way from Lublin to Garwolin. The rucksack contained a purse with the only photos of a child who died during wartime events. Please send the photos to: Colonel Wiktor Grosz, Włochy, 39 Moniuszko Street.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 15, 1945

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At the moment there are twenty-four canteens in Warsaw dispensing over eight thousand meals a day. Five bakeries have been opened. Starting February 20, the number of working bakeries will significantly increase.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 20, 1945

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Since the food factories are now in full operation, jam rations on coupons will be available this month. Soon we will be

distributing frozen fish, half a kilo per person.

—*Dziennik Polski*, Krakow, Feb. 23, 1945

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The Chief Municipal Administration of Warsaw-Praga has issued the ordinance that: (1) all dogs have to be tethered but dogs being walked have to be muzzled and on a leash. Stray dogs roaming the streets will be eliminated (killed) by the police and the army. (2) This ordinance is in force for three months throughout the district of Warsaw-Praga. Doctor Donat Grądzki, veterinarian.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 23, 1945

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Polish fiscal authorities are returning to prewar legislation and call for timely payment of current taxes and payment of overdue bills. There are no war-related tax allowances.

—*Życie Warszawy*, Feb. 27, 1945

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Today, Tuesday February 27, in the Artists' Café, Jan Sztudynger will read his Poem about Paris, written partly in Lublin.

—*Gazeta Lubelska*, Feb. 27, 1945