

## Polish Forced Laborers

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Thanks to the oral history collection *Z Litera 'P': Polacy na robotach przymusowych w hitlerowskiej Rzeszy 1939-1945. Wspomnienia* (With the Letter 'P': Polish Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany, 1939-1945. Recollections) we have a record of the first hand experiences of individual forced laborers.<sup>1</sup>

This collection of oral histories and autobiographical accounts of the experiences of ex-forced laborers is the result of a competition administered by several press organizations in Poznan, Poland, including: the newspaper *Glos Wielkopolski (Wielkopolski Voice)*, Polish Radio in Poznan, and the publishing house *Wydawnictwo Poznanskie (Poznan Publishers)*, in conjunction with the *Wielkopolskiego Towarzystwa Kulturalnego (Wielkopolski Cultural Society)*, and the *Okregowej i Głownej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce* (Regional and Main Nazi War Crimes Commissions in Poland) as well as the *Okreg Poznanski Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację (Poznanian Region of the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy)*. Former inmates of the forced labor camps were asked to write about their experiences during the war. Two hundred twenty six of these oral histories were selected and published in book form.

Although the competition was open to former forced laborers in all parts of Poland, most of those whose accounts were published came from Poznan, which during World War II was the capital city of the so-called Warthegau. The accounts which were published, were chosen as representative examples of the experiences of a forced laborer.

For those who are interested in the oral histories of these people, there is also a wide selection of oral histories which Polish historians at the *Instytut Zachodni (Western Institute)* in Poznan collected immediately following the war. These archived oral histories and the document collection *Documenta Occupationis (Documents of the Occupation)* and the historical works of Czeslaw Luczak and Czeslaw Madajczyk are the most important historical references for research on the the topic of Polish forced laborers during World War II. The most important works by Professors Madajczyk and Luczak -which by the way cover everything from economic exploitation to the annihilation of the Jews, Gypsies and Poles - are still waiting to be translated into English.

In order to carry out the *Germanisierung* (Germanization) of Polish soil by the Nazis during World War II, it was necessary to transfer a tremendous portion of the Polish population to other parts of the country. These forced laborers from the annexed and other parts of Poland served

not only the economic exploitation of their country by the Nazis, but were directly affected by the Nazi program to annihilate the Polish nation through work, starvation and other means. Torn from the context of their pre-war lives, they were to make space for ethnic Germans who would take over their homes, businesses and belongings. As long as they were able to serve the Reichskriegseinsatz in spite of hunger and sickness, they could save themselves from a worse fate in an "Arbeitserziehungslager".

Forced labor and other aspects of the "Volkstumspolitik" in the Warthegau are a radical continuation of the negative Prussian policies toward Poles in the nineteenth century. While the Nazis used other and more brutal means, the basic chauvinistic premises are the same as Bismarck's during the partition period: Posen and its surroundings belonged to the German Reich. The goal of the official state policies was a united and homogenous German population in this region. The Polish state should be destroyed. Its citizens - Christian and Jewish - should disappear from the region. Their property and belongings were to help pay for the war effort and form the basis for the new ethnic German colonization of the region.

### Children as Forced Laborers

In Annetreim Mendel's study in 1990, *Sklavinnen oder Entwicklungshelferinnen?* (Annetreim Mendel: *Sklavinnen oder Entwicklungshelferinnen? Ueber die emotionalen Beziehungen und ueber die interkulturelle Kommunikation zwischen sogenannten Ost-Arbeiterinnen und deutschen Kindern und Jugendlichen waehrend des Zweiten Weltkrieges.* In: *Studien zur Kinderpsychoanalyse*, X (1990). Herausgegeben von der Oesterreichischen Studiengesellschaft fuer Kinderpsychoanalyse; Annetreim Mendel: *Zwangsarbeit im Kinderzimmer. Ostarbeiterinnen in deutschen Familien von 1939-1945. Gespraechе mit Polinnen und Deutschen.* (Herbst 1994 beim dipa Verlag), she attempted with the methods and techniques of a psychologist to analyze the experiences of Polish girls who were sent to the Reich to work as nannies and household help. She analyzed not only the experiences of these Polish girls, but also the experiences of the German children under their care. She came to the conclusion that this particular experience was a concrete cultural exchange. While these experiences covered a whole range of negative and even positive interactions, they represented above contact between two peoples who were otherwise forbidden by the Nazi state to interact with one another.

Because her methods and manner of questioning do not use concrete objective sources, but rather subjective personal experiences, A. Mendel's methods are somewhat problematic for historians. However, we can nonetheless learn a lot from her. Mendel is certainly right in pointing out that not only German children, but also their Polish nannies (often than not more than children themselves), were shaped by this war situation. Not only language, but also culture were exchanged here. In the microcosmic world of the family, a whole spectrum of interactions and emotions were possible: everything from simple acts of human kindness and understanding to beastly brutality and meanness. In many cases, however, emotional and cultural bridges were built, some of which led to contact even after the war. These bridges often made it possible for both sides to endure the war situation.

In a presentation in Poznan in the spring of 1993, Mendel analyzed the forced labor experience in more general terms, particularly regarding the effects on children. Among other

things, she saw the forced labor experience as a break in the personality development of these individuals. Children in particular lost important developmental years. The creation, re-creation and definition of the "ich" in their puberty was missing. Following the war, there was no time to catch up on this lost time: a boy of 14, who was put to work in 1940, was 19 years old in 1945. During the war, he was expected to work harder than adults would normally. There was no time to reflect on his own person. Following the liberation, he was confronted with basic existential questions like finding a job, shelter, food, clothes etc. Once again, there was no time to catch up on this lost period of growing up.

This break in their personality development was devastating for child laborers. Activities which normal teenagers take for granted, such as music, art, sports, hobbies or even their first sexual encounters, did not take place. Instead, there was a deep emotional and developmental vacuum. In addition, their physical development was hindered or handicapped through malnutrition and abusive treatment. Following the war, everything had to be made up for all at once. There was very little time for anything but the most rudimentary education and occupational training. More often than not, marriage partners were also their very first partners and marriage was often little more than an economic institution, which helped them to cope with the physical and psychological handicaps that they brought with them out of the war experience.

These analyses of the forced laborers are difficult for historians to use because they are based on interviews and questionnaires, not on hard facts and thus provide little means for objective analysis. Statements made by the forced laborers have to be taken as they are and given the same weight as more objective sources.

Nonetheless, these perceptions are quite useful in a discussion of the forced laborers. An analysis of the perceptions of former forced laborers allows us to understand their experience with a greater empathy. Taking these questions of personal identity into consideration, we can measure in psychological terms the meaning of the war experience for these individuals. While it is quite impossible to measure this meaning in quantitative terms, this form of analysis allows us to measure at least the qualitative meaning of these historical experiences. Further, instead of constantly focusing on the administrative persecution of these people, we can form a more three-dimensional picture of what really happened to them. These victims of Nazi terror, and not the institutions which their persecutors manipulated, are then the real object of study. This is difficult for historians, because there can often be mistakes in the accounts of victims. None of us can remember everything. We are humans and not machines.

### Forced Laborers in the Armament Industry

While there were many accounts by former forced laborers in the armament industry in *Z Litera P*, I chose "Moja gehenna" ("My hell", pp. 291-307), because I know the author who is referred to here by the pseudonym of "Seweryn Kowalczyk". His fate is one of the most tragic of which I know.

Following the war and five years of forced labor, Seweryn Kowalczyk attempted to finish school. There, he was diagnosed tuberculosis and had to quit before he even got started. He was lucky enough to be granted a bed in the Poznan Sanatorium.

While penicillin was discovered in 1928, and it was used following the war on a widespread basis to fight bacterial infections, there was a terrible shortage in Poland following the war. The methods used to cure TB in Poland following the war were more or less those used in the nineteenth century. Patients laid in beds one next to the other, were told not to move about and basically had to hope that the infection did not spread to other parts of their lungs or body. Basically they had to wait for a miracle.

The head surgeon at the Poznan hospital, who was also in charge of the sanatorium, offered the most courageous patients a miracle cure. Through the removal of at least two of the upper ribs, the affected parts of the lung were removed. The patients were fully conscious during the operation. No anesthesia whatsoever was used. The head surgeon promised Seweryn Kowalczyk through this miracle cure an additional ten years of life.

Seweryn agreed to the operation. The ambitious head surgeon removed not only two, but rather six ribs. The left side of Seweryn's body was only held up by his spine. The head surgeon made a cripple out of this handsome, tall, intelligent man in the best year of his life.

Following a very long convalescence, Kowalczyk finished school, completed his *matura* (high school diploma) and became an accountant. He found a good position as the head accountant at a dairy. He lived for twelve years with his wife and son in an apartment above his office, until she died as a result of the toxic medication prescribed to treat her TB infection. (They had met in the sanatorium. His wife had decided against the miracle cure. The toxic medication used to kill the TB killed her in the end.) On his wife's insistence, he gave his son to her sister. Completely alone and physically at ends, he was soon unable to continue working.

He now lives in an apartment complex built for working-class families in the 1930s. He receives only a minimum state pension for invalids - about \$150 and the Polish state takes taxes out of this ridiculously small sum. He and others like him are not allowed to work. He can accept no honorarium for the work he does for the Stowarzyszenie Poszkodowanych przez III Rzeszy (Society of Those Injured by the Third Reich). His present wife does not receive much more pension than he does, as she was also unable to work much of the latter years of her working life.

They cannot afford anything. For things that they really need like medicine or clothes, they have to count on the state's social system or church charity.

Seweryn Kowalczyk received a payment of 1000 DM to assist him and his wife, paid in zloty from the Fundacja "Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie" (Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation). With this money, he bought himself for once in his life one luxury: an inexpensive Japanese television and satellite antenna in order to better sit out the time until his death.

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All Poles aged fourteen years and above had to register at the Arbeitsamt (Work Office) for work placement. Those who did not follow these orders were either fined or imprisoned. The

Nazis liked to use pseudo-pedagogical methods to teach the Poles how to work. Often, they were sent to six weeks of Arbeiterziehungslager (work camp). This meant six weeks of 12 hour days, seven days a week of hard labor with nearly nothing to eat and roll-calls on the side as an alternative chicane to weaken the will of the prisoners. Many did not survive these work camps. Many grown men came out six weeks later weighing no more than about 30 kg.

The worst punishment for not registering to work, was not getting rationing coupons. In order to receive rationing coupons for everything from bread to heating fuels, individuals had to be registered to work. No official work-place meant no food, housing or existence.

Poles were only paid a fraction of what Germans were paid. In the Warthegau, Poles earned between 40-60 Reichsmark (RM), and Germans earned between 200 and 1000 RM. Jews were basically not paid, but allowed to live as long as they worked. Poles also had very little access to the social system to which they paid into. They were not given coupons for new textiles and only received rationing coupons for wooden shoes once a year. Those who were deported were required to wear a "P" on their clothes at all times. All contact with Germans was forbidden. Polish men who had sexual contact with German women were often punished with the death penalty.

Poles in the Warthegau had to keep their work registration books and ID cards with them at all times. In the case of a razzia, they had to show their work papers to keep from being deported to the Altreich. It was thus in the interest of the Poles in Poznan to be allotted work in Poznan.

At fourteen years of age, Seweryn Kowalczyk was already 175 cm tall and appeared quite adult. Following his fourteenth birthday, he hid half a year at home to avoid registering. This was an intolerable situation, so his parents found him work with a Baltic-German neighbor. This Baltic-German, Richard Raasche from Riga, registered him at the Arbeitsamt as an employee at his chemical laboratory. There, Seweryn and ten other employees produced skin cremes, anti-rheumatic ointments and tonics.

After about a year in this laboratory, he was called into the office, where Rasche was arguing with two Germans civilians. Seweryn understood that they were talking about him. The two Germans took his work registration card and demanded that he come to the Arbeitsamt the next day.

Raasche explained to him that there had been a control by the Arbeitsamt. Male workers were sought for "useful" work. Seweryn's files had been checked and they decided that a girl could do his job. Raasche assured him that he would be sent to work at a factory in Poznan.

At the Arbeitsamt, Seweryn received a new work registration book and a new place of employment. This time he was a trainee of Goering's Reichsluftfahrtministeriums. His place of work was the "Erge-Motor" factory on Glogowska Street. Several hundred Poles of different ages and occupations from in and around Poznan worked there. At first, they were made to screw plates of raw steel together under the foreman's supervision. Following this first phase, they were sent to the mechanical section. Seweryn was first put on the lifter, and later on the milling and grinding machines. In total, he worked there almost half a year.

One day he was called into the personnel office, where he found out that he was to be sent to the Altreich:

This message made me so apprehensive and stunned me so much, that after work, as I rode home on the tram, I climbed into the first wagon, which was only for Germans. In addition, it was not even my line. My physical appearance was quite suspicious and I was asked for my papers by the Germans. When they read that I worked for a Ministry of the Third Reich, they reprimanded me and told me not to make the same mistake again.

On the morning of December 18, 1941, a group of about a hundred people gathered at Poznan's central train station (West). All of them, including Seweryn, were destined for transport to the Altreich. All of them were warned against any attempts to escape. Total obedience was demanded of them.

At 15 years of age, Seweryn left home for the first time. He went to work just 80 km west of Berlin in the city of Rathenow. There he was to work in the "Arado"-airplane factory in Rathenow-Heidefeld. (The central operations were in Potsdam-Babelsberg.)

The factory was completely hidden in the forest. There were a number of huge production hangars, storage facilities, train tracks and switches for the Reichsbahn (German railroad) as well as factory-owned water and electrical works. Many thousands of people worked in the factory. At the time of Seweryn's arrival they produced the Heinkel He-177 bomber. The wings, the rear end and the tail were produced by forced laborers. The other parts of the bomber were produced in some other unknown part of the factory. The completed parts were transported away in the dead of night.

Seweryn lived with his colleagues in a camp with ten wood barracks about 4 km from the factory. Officially, the terrain was referred to as "Arado Flugzeugwerke Gemeinschaftslager Rathenow-Heidefeld, Milowerlandstrasse".

That was also his mailing address. He was allowed to receive mail, although it was censored. It was forbidden to receive any food or clothing from home. Only packages opened in the presence of a guard could be accepted.

On the other side of the hovel, there was a second set of barracks for French prisoners of war, who also worked in the factory. Each barrack had five rooms, in which there were nine two-story bunk beds for sleeping. Each worker had a straw mattress, a pillow and two blankets. There were two-door lockers between the bunk beds. In the middle of the room, there was a small coal stove, two tables and wooden stools.

From the administrative office they received new ID cards, permits for the factory terrain, rationing coupons and a few "P" patches to be sown on the right-hand breast pocket of their clothes. Afterwards, they were taken to work. They were the first group of Poles to work at the factory. In the next few years, many hundreds of Poles came from the so-called Generalgouvernement.

The workers could usually leave the camp without being inspected, although there was sometimes a guard at the gate. Occasionally, the camp inmates went into the city out of curiosity. Seweryn went only once. Everyone stared at his "P" patch and walked to the other side of the street. Youths yelled "Bromberger Moerder" at him and his companions, an allusion to the alleged massacre of 5,000 ethnic Germans in Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) just before the war.

I did not know that the Nazi propaganda had had such an influence on German society. On the doors of hairdressers and restaurants, there were signs "Nur fuer Deutsch". We did not have any reason to go into the city, because there was only trouble waiting for us there."

Each Polish worker was under the supervision of a German with whom they had to work. These German workers could do whatever they wanted to. There was no one to complain to about any mistreatment.

Seweryn found this situation quite difficult at the beginning. Mostly because the language barrier was so large - especially when it came to technical terminology. These difficulties in understanding what was being said often lead to conflicts in which Seweryn was hit in the face.

Russians, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Dutch, Belgians, French, Italians, Spaniards and Serbs worked in the factory. Only the Russians ("Ost") and the Poles ("P") had to be marked with patches.

Work began at six o'clock in the morning and ended six o'clock in the evening. There were two breaks--15 minutes for breakfast and a half an hour for lunch.

My work was to rivet aluminum-sheet and assemble the wing-skeleton. It was necessary to either lie down or at least crouch into the inside of the wing in order to get at the spot being riveted. On the outside, a German stood with a press hammer which hammered the rivets into place. I had to hold a special electrical lamp in front of my eyes with one hand and with the other hand, hammer the rivets with a special instrument. It made a terrible racket, because on each wing there were a number of groups working at the same time. It was, of course, assembly line work. This work had to be done very precisely and supervisors examined each hammered rivet with a mirror on the inside and measured them with precision instruments. When everything was in order, they initialed that particular part of the plate. Then we worked on the other wing, which was on a special scaffolding. In the autumn and winter, we hardly saw any day light, because it was dusk when we went to and from work. In addition, it was dark in the wing, of the plane where I worked. For this reason, we had to use these special electrical lamps which hurt (my) eyes. We had to clock in on name cards when we came and left for work. After taxes and living expenses, which were taken out of our wages, there were only a pair of ten mark bills left. There was nothing to buy for this money because everything was sold with rationing coupons. This work, in constant noise and dust, in physically uncomfortable positions, twelve

hours a day and with a harsh electrical light shining in my eyes, was very hard for me. We also had night-shifts.

Our worst and most tormenting enemy was the constant hunger. At the beginning of 1942, when a new group of Poles from the Generalgouvernement arrived, the Germans took our food coupons from us. From then on, all of the rations for the Polish workers went to the camp kitchen at the factory. This was the worst sacrifice for me, because up until then, they cut a portion of the coupons off in the canteen, and the rest could be used in our free time. Moreover, I had an additional bread card for youths, the so-called "Brotkarte (sic!) fuer Jugendliche. This all came to an end. At that point, we began to receive our rations without a coupon card and everything was prepared by the kitchen. When we came home from work, we found it on our bunk beds.

On Monday evening after work, we were served the following: 750 g bread, a bit of margarine, a three cm thick slice of sausage or pate, and when there was not any sausage, there was marmalade. On Wednesday after work, there was the same ration. On Friday after work, there was the same ration plus 400 g of white bread. In total, there was 2250 g brown bread and 400 g white bread plus a few grams of sausage, margarine and marmalade per person per week.

During the lunch break at the factory, we received one liter of soup in our own menage, which we always carried with us. Once during the week and on Sunday, there were potatoes with a bit of sauce. The potatoes were always with a bit of raspeled carrots or turnips. In the evenings and in the morning, we received hot coffee in the barracks. At that time, I was between 16 and 19 years old and was already 180 cm tall. My body was growing and unfolding and needed food with a lot of calories after the sort of long hard work we did. As a result, I began to feel the physical diminishment and tired easily. I was not the only one.

The consumption of our rations was characteristic. When we came home from work on Monday, we ate our entire ration in one sitting. Because we were hungry we did not have any will power to leave anything for the next day. Also, because we were afraid someone would steal the rest of our food. On Wednesday evening, we ate our rations all at once and did the same on Friday evening, with the exception of the 400 g white bread which was left for Saturday morning. On Saturday evening I did not have anything left to eat. On Sunday, there was only lunch at noon. On Monday afternoon, there was lunch, and then the entire ration on Monday evening was eaten once again. This entire cycle repeated itself systematically until the liberation in 1945. Sundays and Mondays until the evening were the worst for me in this regard.

On Monday morning, I was always weak and I could see spots from hunger. My stomach grumbled because of the lack of food and we counted the hours until noon when we received the "redeeming" litre of weak soup. There was always too little saliva to suppress the stomach acids. There was nothing we could do.



During the years until our liberation, there was never an egg, fruit, butter, cheese, sweets or cake. I never drank a glass of milk, because there was none for Poles.

Thus, in our mistreatment as slaves of the Third Reich, hunger was at the top of the plan. It determined our conduct and manners. We thought about food before work. We dreamed of food when we went to sleep and when we got up. On Sunday, when we sat in front of empty tables or lay in our bunks with empty stomachs, we dreamed of plentiful food. We began to joke at work about how much we could eat if we were to suddenly find ourselves at a wedding banquet. The older colleagues remembered what wonderful fricasee they had once eaten, when they had really taken part in such banquets. With this sort of dreaming, we tried to deceive the hunger, which in spite of all our efforts never let itself be deceived and continued to destroy our organs.

One particular Sunday afternoon, one of our colleagues brought some fresh potatoes back from a field from where he had stolen them. We cooked them and ate them with the skin on them. They tasted so good that we three decided to go back to the field that night. We were so determined due to our hunger, that we did not care about the consequences. What our colleague was able to do by daylight, however, we three did not succeed in doing in the dead of night. We were caught by a factory guard, just as we were returning with our potatoes which we had pulled out with the roots and dirt. This guard had a garden near the field and had set a trap for other foreigners who had been stealing his fruit. When he cried "Halt!, Haende hoch", we threw our bags away and began to run away. However, in that same instance, a couple of shots were fired in our direction. Instinctively, we threw ourselves on the ground, as we were of the opinion that the potatoes were not worth our lives. The German hurried over to where I lay and told me to stand up. The entire time he pointed his pistol at us. He brought us to a waiting room, where they took our documents from us. We woke up there the next morning.

They were interrogated the next morning by the commander of the criminal police.

He thought it was quite interesting that we were all born in Poznan. He started to ask us about our parents, who, all went to German schools as youths, because Wielkopolska before 1918, had belonged to the Prussian part of Poland. When he heard that my parents speak German and that my father, under compulsion, served in the German Army and was wounded at Verdun in France, he was immediately somewhat more lenient, and tried to convince us that we could become Germans if we signed the so-called Volksliste. Some Poles, who had broken down psychologically under the influence of hunger and hard work, had signed this list. We refused, however. Afterwards, he observed the "evidence", our potatoes - approximately 5 kg . As he threw paper in the wastepaper-basket, he ordered that they be brought to the Volkskueche. All of this was protocolled.

This whole potato affair made us think twice. After a few months, we received the court's decision. The two colleagues who were of age (19 and 20 years old) were sentenced to fines of 30 RM each. With regards to my juvenile status, my case was dismissed."

The potato incident happened in 1942. Seweryn had to hold out for a number of years to come. In particular, during the period 1944-45, Seweryn and his colleagues needed great strength. In April of 1944, the factory was bombed by the Allies during a lunch-break. The most important section of the factory was hit. Storage areas which contained paint and flammable materials were also hit. A section of the camp was also hit. Production could not be continued until the end of 1944, and then, due limited facilities and a reduced work force, the factory began building a new plane--the Focke-Wulff-190. Not all of the production crew worked on this bomber. A sizeable number of them, including Seweryn, were sent to dig trenches on the Oder, not far from Miedzich/Birnbaum.

When Seweryn returned to the factory, there was no assembly-line work anymore. The bombing attack had caused great damage. The forced laborers were now watched by disabled soldiers from the front. At the beginning of April 1945, the foreign workers heard about the battles along the Oder. The war was almost over. While the factory continued to produce bombers at a normal pace, each day brought them closer to the end of the war. Thousands of Germans fled through the city each day. They came in carriages, in cars, on horses and motorcycles, with hand-luggage or bare-foot with bundels. Trains only came into the city and did not leave it anymore. Occasionally, there were columns of Wehrmacht soldiers to be seen.

On April 22, the Germans fled the "Arada". When the workers came into the factory in the morning, there were no more guards. Their joy knew no bounds. They cried "Hitler kaput!" Afterwards, the food and provisions rooms were plundered.

The next day, 80% of the forced laborers left alone or in groups toward home. They had no information about the front, so Seweryn decided to stay with some others in the camp. It was possible to take the camp another few days. From a distance, they saw Rathenow burning and heard the echo of shots being fired. On the street they met a Red Army patrol on horseback. The soldiers asked about fleeing Germans and where the road lead to. The remaining workers were given bread, lard and sweets. That was Seweryn's liberation.

At the beginning of May, Seweryn arrived in Poznan. He met his father on the street, who did not recognize him at first. For a long time it fascinated him, that he could cut a piece of bread whenever he wanted to. He did not have much time to rest. By May he was back at work.

Parallel to working I took up my studies again. In February of 1948, I was already in Lyceum. At school, I had my first medical examination --a chest x-ray. While I stood in front of the x-ray machine, the doctor asked me if I had been in a concentration or other Nazi camp. I told her yes. She then turned to the assisting doctor and said "This is what our youth looks like today". She then

turned to me and told me I would not be able to attend school yet. I would have to go to the hospital for treatment of lung-TB. It was a shocking experience for me. In May of that year, three months after the TB was diagnosed, the now well-known cardiologist, Jan Moll, performed a difficult operation on my left lung at the hospital on Szkolna Street. One of my colleagues, Jan Kulik, who lay next to me following the operation, died a few days later. He was also in Nazi-German camps. In 1964, I buried my 36 year old wife. She died of the results of her TB infection which she caught while in Nazi work camps.

I finished my matura in 1950 with the help of my comrades and my own perseverance. I only managed to work 15 years in the People's Republic of Poland, and then interrupted by stays in hospitals and sanatoriums due to complications and new intensifications of my sickness. Today I am 46 years old and for the last eight years, I have lived on a side-track of life. I live on a disability pension and have nitroglycerin tablets in my pocket and on my night-table. How many people would we still have in Poland, if they had not had to live through the occupation, and as I did, have to leave the working world early due to damages done (to them) by the occupation. No one regains their health a second time."

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My discussion of the quite minimal "help" for forced laborers following the German reunification can be found at [Cybrary of the Holocaust/MikeDunn/remember.org](http://CybraryoftheHolocaust/MikeDunn/remember.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Ryszard Dylinski, Marian Flejsierowicz, Stanislaw Kubiak eds. *Z Litera "P". Polacy na robotach przymusowych w hitlerowskiej Rzeszy 1939 - 1945. Wspomnienia.* (Poznan: Wydawnictwo Poznanskie, 1976).