

Romana Holder On Vacation In 1939



This is me in Muszyna in August 1939, just a few days before the outbreak of war. I was on vacation there with a friend. The picture was taken by a professional photographer.

In 1937 I started working in the 'Linia i Litera' print shop. It started out at Krochmalna [in the Jewish district] in a rundown building. I worked in the basement, in this horrible office, somewhere under the stairs. Then a new building was put up, on Grzybowska, I think [in the Jewish district], where the print shop was located on the first floor. I ran the office there: I paid the workers their salaries, typed various things and did some accounting. A real accountant came occasionally to check if everything was in order. I even went to the tax office occasionally; they sent me there to make sure they weren't getting in trouble. It was a big company, with over a dozen workers and draftsmen employed. I remember I had four bosses: Michal Walersztajn, Jerzy Bursztyn-a bon vivant and a very handsome man-and two others: a type-setter and a machinist who made prints on those printing machines. They printed posters, booklets.

In August 1939 I was in Muszyna [a resort in the south of Poland, in the Beskid hills] with this friend of mine from the print shop. We were coming back from Zegiestow [a resort near Muszyna] on a train. We were the last ones to get on the train and this man looked at us and said: 'Those Jews, they're everywhere.' Well, that's enough for me.

I returned to Warsaw from Muszyna on 23rd August. My brother was in Zakopane. On 1st September 1939 I went back to work at 'Linia i Litera' [on 1st September 1939 the German army crossed the Polish border and World War II began]. One of my bosses said they were putting up posters about the draft, so I started crying. So this son-of-a-bitch, one of the owners, says, 'What are you crying for?' So I said 'What do you mean, what for? I have a brother who is 18.' My brother responded to the Umiastowski order in September, I think. A whole group of my friends went as well. When the Germans came in, the print shop lasted a month or two and was closed down.

I took this picture and some other ones with me when I left the Ghetto in September 1942, a few days before the major deportation [Grossaktion].