

I remember a neighbour, this Mr Kowalski who was a very big man and everyone was convinced that he was a spy. I remember when he used to come to visit my grandfather. Whenever he entered the yard, people started to talk differently, they were careful with words so I remember that atmosphere that he was surrounded with.

I also remember how I used to go to an old hut located nearby, together with my sister. And in this hut, where maybe 12 to 15 people could fit in, we played different games like hide and seek or cards. As I was from a home, where nobody played cards and there were no social gatherings, it was really entertaining for us to go there. We used to run very fast towards the hut and later also come back home running very quickly.

I also remember, meeting a particular person when on the road from my grandparent's farm to the pastureland,. It was definitely a German man, who threatened to shoot me. The fear I felt was beyond understanding. However, I couldn't imagine being shot, not to mention being dead. But this is what I remember from my childhood.

And I also recall this one colourful dream. I dreamt of a very green meadow with intense pink flowers, even more diverse than the ones I used to see on my grandfather's meadow. I remember my dad coming back from Turek on a bike. He used to work in Turek in a drainage business and he lived there in some old woman's house and every Wednesday he came back home on a bike. It was probably more than 60km but my father was a very athletic man and this distance was not that much of a problem for him. So I remember this atmosphere when dad used to come home and brought us some sweets, sometimes even shoes. And shoes were a very desired item back then. And I remember waiting to get those shoes, which didn't have any holes or patches – as during the war everyone wore so called 'treps'. It meant that the upper of an old shoe was attached to the wooden shoe base. Obviously, I didn't wear them as I was too little, but the truth is I did wear shoes with holes in them. Adults used to wear those 'treps'.

I was getting used to the idea of war, but war was something natural for me, as it started in 1939 and I was only 1 year old back then. And for me war was a time of feeling partially safe, I used to sense the fear and anxiety in adults. I remember them secretly cooking meat under beetroots and other vegetables to hide the scent of meat. So to sum up, my childhood was sort of spending time with adults who were afraid, but I wasn't afraid myself, but I sensed that something bad was out there and we had to be careful.