

From the Testimony of Marlot Wandel on Work in Radom Ghetto

Q: You mentioned something about "*shoppen*"?

A: In the "*shoppen*" which is a workplace. By the way, I wanted to say that my mother was a bookkeeper in Germany when she was married, but in Poland she also didn't know the language. She didn't know Polish. She felt she needed a profession to sustain herself and the children, not to be on charity of the community, so she started to go to school with the Polish young girls who translated for her from Polish to Yiddish - they didn't know German. And she got the gist from Yiddish. She learned how to be a corsetmaker, "corsetarium". She really learned how to sew on the machine, how to put it together. In Poland at the time it was from "A to Z", it wasn't like in America - you go and buy a size. You know, you had to make it up. And this in a way made it possible for her to sustain us financially because later on when it came to the "*shoppen*", she said: "I'm a corsetier." She was saying that before: "I'm a corsetier." So therefore she was servicing the German girlfriends and wives in the "*shoppen*" and this was one service like somebody made nightgowns, somebody made underwear, somebody was a printer - she was a corsetier. One among many - they had plenty - and my sister was her finisher and I was cutting the flat and whatever - we were all put to use in order not to be killed, in order to be able to have permission to live even in the ghetto. We had to be employed, you had to be productive for the Reich. And my brother who was a little younger was like the telephone boy. You know, they didn't have telephone service, so he was the "laufbursche" in the "*shoppen*".

Q: So everybody had his job?

A: Everybody had his job. And we're talking about 1940 when the boy was seven years old and I was maybe nine. It was just an existence. If you think rationally how one can survive, it is totally unrealistic, totally incomprehensible how much the human being has in itself and mostly I think it's my mother's strength and faith that has pulled us through.

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