

# Return to Kremenets under German Rule

Natalia Oleksyn-Brodzka (1922-2002)

Submitted by her son, Jacek Oleksyn, Institute of Dendrology, Polish Academy of Sciences

Machine translated from Polish

**[Editor's Note:** In February 2018, Dr. Ron Doctor, co-coordinator of the Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP, received this message from Dr. Oleksyn:

“Thank you very much for preserving the memory of the innocent people murdered in Kremenets. My mother’s best friend from the Kremenets Lyceum (High School) was Ela (I do not know her Jewish first name) Motshan (Moczan in Polish). She helped my mother with mathematics. They traveled together around western Ukraine and spent time with my grandparents (my grandmother was killed by Germans in the first days of the German-Soviet war in 1941).

“I asked my mother ca. 20 years ago to put her memoirs in writing. Attached you will find a short excerpt recording her attempt of helping her best friend. Shortly before the liquidation of the Kremenets ghetto, she visited Ela [Elke] Moczan and her family in the ghetto. Her memoirs are >300 pages long, and here I put only a short excerpt. From the entire Moczan, family it is possible that only father of Ela Moczan may have survived, since he left Kremenets together with Russian military in early days of the war in 1941.

“After expatriation from Ukraine in 1946, my mother worked at a Jewish orphanage in Legnica, and my father, in ORT (the head was Aaron Rosenzweig who emigrated to Israel after the Six-Day War and the antisemitic campaign orchestrated shortly after that in the Communist countries).

Sincerely,

Jacek Oleksyn  
Institute of Dendrology  
of the Polish Academy of Sciences”

In the 1926 Kremenets Residents List, Elke’s family listed as living on Krawiecka Street:

Moczan Shloma-El (born 1886)  
Moczan Chana-Gitla (born 1886)  
Moczan Duwid (born 1914)  
Moczan Rywka (born 1918)  
Moczan Elka (born 1921)

Duwid Moczan survived and included a commemoration of his family in [\*Kremenits, Vyshgorodek, un Potshayuv yizkor bukh\* \[Memorial Book of Kremenets, Vyshgorodok, and Pochayiv\]](#), ed. Editor: Falik Lerner, Buenos Aires, 1965 (478 pp, Y, Sp), page 462.

The excerpt below probably took place in May 1942.]

My forced journey from Radoszówka to Kremenets fell on a bright May day. On the way, I met polite hosts who gave me a lift, so I did not feel the nuisance of the long road very much. I came to Kremenets at a time when the sun was still high in the sky. I was planning to stay with Romek Zygmuntówna’s family, who lived near my destroyed house, but I abandoned this intention because my family had serious problems. I was invited to dinner—a soup whose only ingredients were sugar beet and water.

Flint hungry. Germans banned food from entering the city. Food could be bought from speculators, but money was needed for that, and people did not have money because there was no work. Economic life had ceased to exist. I learned about the tragic death of our professors and educators, and about the concentration of the Jewish population in the ghetto. Leaving, I left one of the two pieces of bacon that Zenia managed to ask for my husband for me.

The ghetto gate at Szeroka Street was open wide. There was an array of signs forbidding entry and exit, but the two guards watched indifferently as I passed through her. I found Elka Moczan at the tub, washing underwear for wages. A younger sister [probably Henye—Ed.] stood next to her—a black-eyed, raven-haired girl. Elka spoke with regret about the indifference of the rich Jews to the poverty of the poor, then with trembling hands she pulled the certificate of matriculation out of the drawer, threw it on the table and began to scream, pointing with a wet finger: “What good will this matriculation do me? What did I need all the fives for? Look at her”—she pointed to her sister—“she is so smart, so talented, so beautiful, and they will kill her! They will kill us all!”

She shivered, unable to control her fear. Her face was brick-red with baked pastries. It came to my mind to lead her out of this hell and return to Bodiaczow with her, but this impulse faded with the certainty that Elka would not leave her parents and sister. I tried to encourage her. When leaving, I left the rest of the food: a second piece of bacon and a loaf of bread. That’s all I could do.

In the ghetto, I found a tailor who had sewed my navy-blue coat before the war and ordered him to rework it for the summer. When I asked about payment, the tailor asked shyly for two loaves of bread. I bought them, not without some speculator’s hardship, with the money Father had given me. I recognized this coat as a masterpiece of tailor’s art. The one who made it was a real master in his profession, and he did this job for two loaves of bread!

From the ghetto, I went to the Czarnecka girl. I found her in the kitchen, to which she tried to bring order. Only a nanny—a woman over 50—who worked for a spoonful of food was in service in this house. The girl, despite lung disease, had to join in the housework. She offered to help me without asking for permission from my mother, stepfather, or brother. She felt independent in her room. We could sleep on one couch and share what the nanny served on her plate. From the girl I learned about the murder of seven of our professors by the Nazis, three heads of the high school administration, four colleagues, three fathers, and many other citizens of the city. This crime remains alive despite the passage of time. This is due to the collective memory of the pupils of the Krzemieniecki High School, as well as the awareness that despite the efforts, the circumstances of this murder have not been fully explained.