MEMOIRS
RED
AND WHITE
POLAND,
THE WAR, AND AFTER

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To my children, Anna, Eve, and Paul
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After the publication of my book *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto* (Notre Dame, 2005), I realized that my generation, the generation of the Second World War, was disappearing in an accelerated fashion. This should not have surprised me, but it did, and it led me to add my voice to the others of my generation. The first draft of my memoirs was written for my children and grandchildren. Some readers of that draft suggested that my reminiscences would be interesting to a more general public. In this book I have eliminated certain details of interest only to my family but left the majority of the text intact.

Like the Polish flag, composed of two contrasting colors, red and white, my memoirs are cast in red and white. “Red” treats largely my wartime life in Europe, life full of blood and death. My success in that part of my life was survival. “White” represents my successful migration and peaceful life in America.

Since I believe that I come from an interesting family, I describe its members in some detail. For some facts about my forebears, I consulted the writings of my mother, and for details concerning the death of my mother and my sister, I consulted materials published after 1989. Otherwise, there were no attempts on my part to conduct historical research or to engage the methods of academic writing. I began to write down my memories in the summer of 1998,
and after many interruptions, I finished this work in the summer of 2014.

To provide a broader picture of the collective experience of my generation during that calamitous century, I mention my contemporaries as well as the members of my extended family. The experiences of my generation are important to Poland. The postwar Soviet government made considerable attempts to “control” recent history, to make it conform to the official Marxist historical “truth.” While these attempts were generally unsuccessful in Poland itself, I think that the Soviet propaganda had some influence outside that country. For instance, the often-repeated opinion that all, or almost all, of anti-Nazi resistance was inspired by the Communists entered more readily into the historical consciousness of the West than in Poland. I hope that my reminiscences will contribute to a more historically authentic picture.

NOTE ON POLISH NAMES AND ORTHOGRAPHY

Customarily, within the family and among friends, Poles use the diminutive forms of first names, given here in parentheses at first appearance. A relatively small number of first names are used, so to distinguish between various persons, many names have several diminutives. Thus Maria can be Marysia, Mania, Mańka; and Anna, Ania, Anka, Anula; and so on. I use these diminutive forms when they seem to be easier to Anglo-Saxon eyes and ears. Thus I write Bronek, Franek, Kasia, Włodek, and so on, rather than Bronisław, Franciszek, Katarzyna, Włodzimierz.

In Polish, ɕ is always ts (even before ł); ch is h (horse); w is y; ę is y (as in yet); ę is a short English į (bit); cz is ch (church); sz is sh; szcz is shch (ashchurch); rz is zh (as in the French Jacques). There are three specific Polish vowels: ą is a nasal o, resembling the French on; ł is the nasal ł, French fin; and ó, ł, a and ł are always oo (tool). There are five specific consonants: ć (and ę followed by ł) is a soft (palatal) ts (the Italian ciao); ś (and ż followed by ł) is a palatal ś (sure); ż (and ż followed by ł) is a palatal ż (pleasure); ł is w; ł (and ł followed by ł) is the Spanish ñ.