

Good afternoon. I'm Bernard Weinstein, director of the Kean College oral testimonies project on the Holocaust.

I am Paul Monka, survivor of the Holocaust. I was born in Bedzin, Poland, which was about 12 kilometers from the German border. The presence of Jews in Bedzin was about 45,000 against a population of 60,000. Jews lived in Bedzin for about 500 to 600 years.

It was one of the oldest cities in Poland. They were invited by the King Kazimierz the Great, who brought the Jews in to improve the commerce and economy of Poland. And he promised and delivered full autonomy to the Jews at that time. And the Jewish people lived very comfortably in this city for this period until Hitler came to power.

I remember in 1933, I was a young boy, and I used to go with my father to Germany. We had a trolley car which went from us to Germany. It was like an open border. And I remember that the people there were very friendly to me. As a matter of fact, they used to give me toys when I came with my father. They liked to deal with him. He was in textile business, wholesale. And he had customers in Silesia, and also in Germany. But later on, when Hitler took over and he started a propaganda against the Jews, things really changed dramatically.

How old were you when Hitler invaded Poland?

When Hitler invaded Poland, I was going 18 years old.

What do you remember? What are some of your memories of your early life in Bedzin?

Well, Bedzin, as I said before, was a city where the presence-- I mean, they lived for so many years, they had highly good school systems. And being that we had autonomy, we had our own mayor, we had our own police, and our own courts. And when I was a young boy, about 3 and 1/2 years old going to 4, I was sent to cheder. It means that I attended a kindergarten-type school where pre-school kids go. And as a matter of fact, by the age of five, we knew how to read the Hebrew letters, and we knew exactly how to daven, pray in the shuls.

And it was almost like a Jewish town. Friday afternoon, the town completely was empty. Everybody was preparing for Shabbos. And everybody ran around to make the last preparations for that Sabbath. The Sabbath was very holy in our town. The people who could afford to buy food had to share it with the ones who couldn't. So it was a charitable way of saying there won't be any hungry people going around.

The schools were fantastic. We all had enough education by just finishing public school. But if somebody went to high school, it was even greater. And very few had to go to colleges. All these things naturally changed when Hitler invaded Poland.

I will go back even to the time when I finished. I went to public school, which was Mizrahi, it was a Hebrew school. Then I went from there to junior high school. And to finish up high school, I went to a technical lyceum, which was in Piotrków Trybunalski. It was about maybe 400 kilometers up north. And later on, after I finished that school, I was accepted to the Polytechnic of Warsaw. Actually, the name was [NON-ENGLISH] of two prominent Jews, German Jews who wanted to educate the Polish Jewish youth in technical matters.

And I went to this school just maybe for a few months. We had an incident in the school where we were studying calculus. And Professor-- his name is [? Jalenski-- ?] was laying out for some problems. And then he asked the class, do you understand what I have taught you here? So if somebody knows, please raise your hand? So I was sitting in the back, and I raised my hand. So Professor [? Jalenski ?] said to me, we don't need any Jewish answers.

Well, maybe you don't know that, but because of the influence of Hitler, in the time when he came to power, till 1938 and '39, Poland became anti-Semitic. As a matter of fact, they tried to bring all kinds of rules against the Jewish people-- economic rules, no violent rules. Usually, the Polish people were more liberal people. They were not gangsters, like the Germans were. But later on, things changed. A new fascistic party came about, [NON-ENGLISH]. And they were anti-Semitic, and they wanted to do violent things against the Jewish people.

Now at that particular time in the school, when a Jew came, he had to sit in the last rows. It means there was numerus clausus in Latin. It didn't allow a Jew to be an equal citizen with the Polish people. This was against the rules and regulations of the Polish government, but it still was adopted. So when I got up, I was very upset when he told me, I don't need any Jewish answers. And I said to him, Professor [? Jalenski, ?] if you don't need any Jewish answers, how come you use a book written by my uncle, Professor Monka from the [? Stefan ?] [? Batory ?] University in Vilna?

When he heard this, he was very embarrassed. He got red in his face and he started shouting things. And I thought that this is not good for me already that the professor can express himself with hating the Jews in front of a whole class. It was very upsetting. So as soon as the class finished, I tried to run out from the class fast. And as I ran down the steps, I was approached by about 15 hooligans, university students who attacked me so brutally, knocked me down, hitting me all over the face and the stomach and the back. And a policeman was standing not far that didn't pay any attention to that.

Was this directed just to you, or was it directed to all Jewish students?

It was directed to me particularly, because I confronted the professor, and I told him that-- I embarrassed him, really.

Prior to this, nothing--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Prior to this, there were incidents in the university that they beat up some Jewish students. There weren't too many Jewish students. In the class of engineering that I was accepted, there was only five Jews, and we had a class of 250, maybe. So when I was beaten up and blood was coming out from my mouth, from all over, the policeman saw that I'm about to be killed. So he came up and he says to me like this, do you need some help?

So as much as I was hurt and as much as I felt bad, I said, I don't want no help. And I slowly got up and I walked home. I lived with my uncle and aunt in Warsaw. And when I came in, they didn't recognize me. I was black and blue. I was completely shook up. They called immediately a doctor, and they called my parents.

When you think about it now, why did you refuse the help?

From the policeman?

Yes.

Because this is my nature. When I come with my story, you will see exactly how I acted later in my life. I felt so humiliated that they did it to me. And I really loved Poland. I thought that this is a beautiful country, that I have all the privileges. I was accepted to school. I had no problem. Very few incidents of calling me dirty Jew or anything like that. So I felt that Poland is my country. And I felt very insulted that something like this could happen.

So the next day, the doctor came in. He examined me. Nothing was broken, really. So he said, I would like to take you to the hospital, but if you can stand all kinds of pains, I'll leave you home. The next day, my parents came to Warsaw. And I decided right away that I don't want to go to a school like that. And they took me out from school. This incident I'm telling is just to show you what the influence of Hitler was on Poland at that particular time.

I took a crash course in French, and I was accepted in Belgium, Liège, the University of Montefiore. Unfortunately, it was not for me to go to a foreign university, because the war broke out. I remember before the war broke out, my parents and my brothers and sisters went to the mountains. We always went a month in summertime. And I packed myself up, and I was ready to go to Belgium. It was a week before Hitler started the war. And I was stopped on the border, and I was turned back.

A week later, the war started. It was September 1st, 1939. Being that we are so close to the German border, we felt the

impact right away. Now Friday morning, we got up in the morning, we heard bombardment, not in the city itself, but around the cities. And then we walk, we take a look outside, and we hear that people are screaming that a war broke out. We look up in the skies, there are hundreds of planes flying east, and the explosions around us.

Two days later, the German troops marched into my town. This was exactly September 3rd, a Sunday morning. They were highly technical. You couldn't see a German soldier walk. Mostly were on motorcycles, on half tracks, and other means. The people of Bedzin came out to see them marching in.

Nobody felt that this is going to be a catastrophe for the Jewish people. They all felt that it will be another occupation. We were used to occupations. I had never experienced it, but we were used to occupations, because during the history, there were many occupations of our town by the Germans, then by the Austrians, then by the Russians. But this was a very sad moment to see [GERMAN], the German troops marching into this beautiful city of Bedzin, where the Jews enjoyed such a beautiful life with their neighbors, where people received an education-- maybe more of a Jewish education than a Polish-- but the Polish education was equal to the Jewish.

We had very beautiful youth, and we had dreams, dreams that maybe one day, we will all go to Israel. We were Zionist. We were brought up Zionistic in our town. We all belonged to different organizations. I personally belonged to organization HaNoar HaTzioni which was a middle ground, not left and not right. And we lived with a dream, and we met on the streets. Every day in the evenings, we walked, and we said hello to each other.

It was good to live there. It was a prosperous region in Poland. We lived on coal and steel ore. And Silesia was one of the most industrial areas in Poland. It combined with many cities other than Bedzin, Sosnowiec, Katowice. This was a region which is like a metropolis area. It was almost like a very tremendous big town connected with a trolley car back and forth, even into Germany, as I said before.

A few days later, when the Germans occupied our town, they came every day with different orders. A curfew 6:00 to 6:00. We had to wear yellow armbands with a Star of David in black. Later on, it was changed to a yellow patch with a J inside, Juden. In German, Juden means Jew. And we had to walk in the middle of the street. We were forbidden to walk on the sidewalks.

German visitors used to come from the neighboring towns from Germany, and we were a laughing stock to them. They spit at us. They did all kinds of things. We couldn't understand that we are different than other people. We could not understand that the Jewish people are different than the German people or the Polish people. So to us, it was a tremendous humiliation. The feeling of not being able to run in the street, and having fun with your friends and enjoying life like we used to do was something which we could not comprehend.

Then later on, they used to start taking elderly people to forced labor. That means they took them out. They took them from the street. They gave them shovels and picks and all kinds of instruments. And they told them to work in the gardens, in all kind of streets, by cleaning the street, by picking up the garbage, all kinds of things that some of them were not used to doing.

I remember my father was taking one of these labor movements. And I ran after him, and I wanted to see what they're going to do to him. And he worked in a garden. And he was beaten by a German guard. And I was so upset that I wanted to run over the fence, and I wanted to take revenge right away. But some of my friends say, you're not going anyplace, because they'll shoot you.

Eight days later, in the evening-- this was Saturday prayers-- they surrounded the synagogue with troops. They throw fire flames-- what do you call that?-- on the synagogue, and on eight blocks surrounding the synagogue. They didn't let anybody out from the synagogue. While the synagogue was burning, some Jews tried to take out the Torahs. And they caught one guy with a Torah, and they shot him right away.

In that incident-- when this happened, we lived about 10 blocks away from the synagogue. And we got scared that maybe the fire will also be thrown on our building. I grabbed my whole family and I said, let's go up on the attic. We went up on the attic and then on the roof because when I was a child, I used to go through that attic, we used to go

through another building. And there was a garden down below, and we used to have a hiding place. And it was just for fun.

So I thought that just in case, if the Germans will throw the flamethrowers on our building, then we will go down to the other building, and we'll go down to the garden and we'll hide there. But where we saw the flames and we saw the shouting and the screaming of the people, it's just undescrivable how we felt. We all got completely like shocked. Because all of a sudden, in a peaceful town, you see people being killed and burned. And I started screaming. I was so, so upset, that the whole family jumped at me, and they say, don't scream. Because if the Germans will hear your voice, they will definitely kill us all.

Later on, when our house was not meant to be destroyed, we were all down to our apartments. And we were watching all night to see what happened there. The screams started to subside. We thought that we did not know the damage as much as it happened, because we couldn't see the whole area.

Next day, the charred bodies of 800 people were taken away to a mass grave out of the town, and among them, a friend of mine. His name was [? Vivek ?] [? Strier. ?] I loved this friend so much that he was like a brother to me. He got killed when he ran out of his burning house, and he climbed up the church wall, and a bullet hit him in the head, and he fell down. I missed him very much. As a matter of fact, many, many years, even today when I think of him, he's vividly the nice-looking guy who had so much income and belonged to the same organization with me. And I missed him.

How old was he when he died?

He was about 17 and 1/2 or 18 years old. He lost all his family. The whole family got killed in this onslaught. I understand that in the neighboring towns, there were similar incidents, but not as brutal as this one. This gave me an idea that Hitler came here to destroy all the Jewish people. In 1939, a week into the war, I knew deep in my heart that we are all going eventually to be killed. However, you live with the feeling and with hope that things like this are not going to happen anymore.

They came later on, confiscated all the businesses, threw all the inhabitants from better neighborhoods out. And we lived in a mediocre neighborhood, so they gave us another two families to live with us. Because we had an apartment of five rooms, so we got another two families. It was crowded, but we accepted the will of God, whatever has to be.

Excuse me, was the town already a ghetto by this time?

At that time, the town was-- being that we had 45,000 Jews, the whole town, except for the better neighborhoods which I mentioned before, was an open ghetto. The Gentile people lived around the town and some in town. As a matter of fact, across the street from us was a Gentile family. Their name was [? Ujawick. ?] One of his sons was a good friend of mine. And he lived there with all of his family, plus he had tenants too.

Were the Gentiles allowed inside?

The Gentiles at that time were allowed to come inside, yes.

But you were not allowed to go out?

We were not allowed to go out anymore. But it was like an open ghetto. You just took a bicycle, and maybe you drove out to get some food. Because food started to become very scarce. There were bread lines getting bigger all the time.

There were punishments coming later on, when we had already the patch with Star of David on, one in front on the left side and one in the back. So we identified from the back and from the front. Everyone. It was a pity seeing the young children who didn't understand what Judaism means or what a Jew is running in the street, not knowing that they are not allowed to walk on the sidewalks, with their parents running after them, trying to tell them something. It was impossible to understand the feeling of all the people.

But later on, when things got worse, when they wanted to punish people for-- let's say, somebody went out from the town and brought some food in and wanted to sell it to the Jewish people, and he was caught. The punishment was to hang that person on a tree and bring in thousands of people to watch the punishment so nobody would do such things. There was absolute control of the German might to not allow Jews to live decently.

Later on, when they confiscated my father's business, the director of that new business-- a German-- took him in, because he wanted to familiarize himself with the articles of what he had, the textile stuff. And he took him to work, and he also took in my younger brother. And I again wanted to go to work.

So I met a friend of mine. His name is Ludwig Ehrlich, who lives now in Brooklyn, New York. And his father had an factory. He used to make from tin all kinds of things for the kitchen, like to bake. So he came, and he said, look, Paul, you went to a technical school. Being that we all have to have work, maybe we can form a little bit of like a little workshop, and we'll take in a German director. And so this way, we'll have work, and the Germans won't be able to take us to forced labor.

And we did so. And we found a fellow, his name was [? Dukstulski. ?] I don't know how much he loved the Jewish people, but he was a decent fellow. So we proposed to give him a directorship and to go with him. The work what we have done there was on machines which were very old, so we had to do everything with our strength. It was like slave labor. We invited ourselves to slave labor, but being that we will be in our hometown.

And he liked the idea. He was drinking every day. He was happy that we worked, and he could sell the stuff in Germany. And he made good money. And we had about 10 kids working for us. My brother worked there-- the youngest one-- his friends. And so they were all happy, and we all got green cards. It was stating that we worked for this and this. Employer and director is [? Dukstulski. ?] He was like-- I don't know-- like a lieutenant or anything in the S - NSDAP, like the brown uniforms.

One day, when they start to take the young people to a labor camp, the Germans had an idea to fool the Jewish people that they mean well for them to train them into special professions, and they will make sure that the young people will go to work so the older people can be fed by them and get enough help from them to support them with the standard of living what they need. So in the beginning, that was the idea. They took young people, and they took them to labor camps, to Germany, and to Silesia.

By the way, our area was integrated into Germany, annexed. Because we were so close to the border, and they had a claim always that Upper Silesia is German land. It's like Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. So the young people were caught in the middle of the street, taken to labor camps. In the beginning, they were writing letters. Later on, letters stopped. They never had a chance to come back from that.

Later on, again they started with forced labor camp, where they formed a Jewish Militz police. And they made them do the dirty work what the Germans didn't want to do. That means that if they would need 1,000 young people to go to a camp, the Jewish police will come, and they will surrender them, or take them to arrest them, or take them to a special dulag, they call it, a transit camp. And from there, they would be sent to Germany, to different camps which were spread all over Germany.

I personally did not-- I was not happy with a Jew going and helping the Germans. But it was not for me to say who wants to serve, who doesn't want. Everybody thought that if you will become a Jewish policeman-- by the way, they had no guns. They had only rubber sticks. Because they wouldn't allow them to have any guns, the Germans.

So we were afraid to go in the streets, really. Because every time somebody went out and was not prepared, a policeman or a German came. There was always a German policeman with a few others who came and arrested these people. I was lucky, because I had the green card. And in the beginning, it helped.

But later on, somehow, being that we were three brothers and no one went to a labor camp, and they needed a quota, and they couldn't-- people were watching themselves. They did not go out in the street so easily. They tried to not be caught. So they came with an idea that they have to go from house to house and tell that one of the children should go to a labor

camp.

And in my case, it was that they came to my house, and they asked my mother, where are the boys? So she told him that they are working. Then when I came home, my mother said that the Jewish police was here, and they said that you have to come to us to sign something, identify yourself if you're working or not. So I wasn't afraid, being that I knew that I am working for that [? Dukstulski, ?] I one day decided to go over.

And when I went over, the chief of the Jewish police was sitting on a desk, imitating some of the Germans with his feet on the desk. And he said, what is your name? And I told him. He said, you're going to go to a labor camp. You're not going to go home anymore. We're going to send you to a dulag in another town, Sosnowiec, and you are going to go to that labor camp.

I got very upset, and I said to him, well, if I have to go to the labor camp, I have to ask my director first if he's going to relieve me from my work. And then I will go home, pack up my things, and if I have to go, I'll go. So he had a little stick, and he threatened me with the stick. I got very upset. And when he hit me, I grabbed him by the tie, threw him over the desk. I don't know how much strength I had then, but I must have been strong to be able to do it.

I cannot even tell the name of this person, because the person right now is a survivor himself who is in the hospital, dying. It wouldn't be proper for me to mention the name. But in telling the story, I'm not favoring because he was Jewish. I must say that we have plenty of Jewish people who did not behave well during the occupation.

The policemen-- maybe three or four policemen-- jumped at me, beat me up. We had a fight. Somehow, I managed to escape from the police station. And I was running in the street towards the work, towards my shop. And people looked at me like I would be crazy. My coat-- it was wintertime-- so my coat was torn, and I was bleeding.

And when I came to the shop, I fell on the floor and I lost my conscious. And three of the policemen were after me. While I was laying, I was beaten by them. When my brothers and the people who worked in that shop saw what's happening, they attacked the three policemen brutally, and they beat them up. Later on, when I came to myself, and they--

Were these policemen known to you--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Yes.

--through your living in the town?

Yeah. I knew the names of the--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

They were people you were familiar with?

As a matter of fact, one went to school with me.

Yeah.

But because he was a policeman, he thought that he's a big person. When I came back to conscience, and they told me that they notified the [? Dukstulski, ?] the director, and that he was drunk, and they woke him up, and that they told him the story. In the meantime, the Jewish police felt that they were a laughing stock, that they felt very insulted. They ran to the police station, which was not the Gestapo. It was just a regular Schupo police station in [PLACE NAME]. And all of a sudden, two policemen came with three of the Jewish police, and they arrested me and Ludwig Ehrlich. This was my partner through this thing where we worked together.

When we were arrested, the people all ran to my parents to tell them what happened. And they thought that we will never come back. Because once you arrested a Jew, usually, they never came back. Anyhow, we were beaten up down in the police station horribly. But in the same time, [? Dukstultski ?] came, the director. And he was very upset that we were arrested. And he compared us as good workers-- he showed to the commander there, look at their hands, how hard they work. And look at the policemen, they have soft hands. They don't do nothing. And there he really insulted them.

So they let us go. This was the first miracle. My wife used to talk about miracles happened to me. It was the first miracle. When we came home, we went back to work. The police did not like us anymore. We knew that we will be always picked to any selection or anything like that.

When you say the police didn't like you, do you mean the Jewish police?

No, the Jewish police, because the German police didn't know us.

Yeah.

It was a big town. There was only very few German police. There was mostly Jewish police who worked in cahoots with the Germans. As a matter of fact, I forgot to mention that we have a Jewish committee in our town. You know that every town-- when the Germans came in at the beginning in 1939-- this did not happen in the places where my wife lived. Because over there in '41, when they came in, they had the Sonderkommando already. They came to kill.

And here, being that Silesia and Zaglebie were annexed, they had to behave themselves a little more decent, because they were afraid a little bit that the German population should not notice the real killings, what they really meant to do. It was politics, in a way. Later on, the situation became stronger.

Especially in the early morning, they surrounded the buildings. They pulled out any Jewish people they can, mostly younger people, and they send them to labor camps. That purpose was to make slaves out of the younger people. And then later on, they'll have only children and grownups and adults or older people, and they'll be able to decimate them much easier.

In one of these-- they called it the [NON-ENGLISH]. That means it was not a selection yet. It was like coming and surrounding the area, and taking out the people. My brother was caught in one of these things, and he was sent to a labor camp in Germany. We felt terribly when he was taken away, because it was the first casualty, really, that we had. And we thought that this is something that is terrible.

But we had to go on with our lives somehow. They were talking about a closed ghetto. They were talking that they're going to open up shops for people, that they're going to be employed and make uniforms for the army. We had in our area probably the biggest working shops in Poland for military equipment and military uniforms in the whole of Poland. Maybe Lodz was another center like that.

And people went to work on small wages. They couldn't even buy too much bread with it. Hunger started to inflict the population. There was less and less food in the area. Anything which came in, came in through some Poles who managed to come into the city who still lived in that open ghetto, and managed to hand it over to the Jewish people.

Then I decided that I have to take a job, so I approached a friend of mine, who-- by the way, I forgot to mention that [? Dukstultski ?] was taken to the front. When Germany attacked Russia, [? Dukstultski ?] got taken to the front, and the small shop was--

Dissolved?

--dissolved. I was then forced to take another job in order to have a card. So I approached a friend of mine. His name is [? Feyerman. ?] And his parents had a big factory. They make bolts and nuts and nails, all kind of things. And it was run by a big German director. His name was Fred [? Pishniak. ?] And [? Pishniak ?] came from Berlin, some area. And he

accepted me to work, because I had the--

They got me to work there. And there was about 800 people working there. There were very few Jews. And I was very happy that I got this job, because this way, I could show that I'm making money to help my family out.

I worked there for a few months, and I did a pretty good job. Two engineers came from Germany, and they came from Bavaria, from very prominent families. I remember the names. One was Dietrich and one was Kohl. And when the director came to introduce them that they're going to work with us, I by mistake wanted to shake hands with them. And they pulled me out, said they don't shake hands with dirty Jews. This form.

But the director said I should show them around, show them the machines that we run. And being that I made special tools for certain machines, I went there, and I start showing them. They did not like me, but I didn't care. I thought, who am I to worry if they like me or not? I know that none of the Germans like me.

One day, when the night shift came-- and I was not working on the night shift that time-- the two engineers came in and told the operator of that machine to run the machine a little faster. Because they wanted to show the director how good they are. So naturally, that machine broke down. Next day, in the morning, when I came in, I was blamed that the machine was destroyed.

I told the director who was mad at me, and I explained it that I wasn't here. They must have sped up the machine. And the operator told him that I was right, that they take came at night to tell him to speed up the machine. Because he was afraid himself, although he was Polish, so it wasn't so bad.

I fixed the machine little by little, with the help of other people, naturally. And the machine was running slower, but it was fixed. They were so mad at me that one day, when the director left, they called the Gestapo to tell them that-- my name is Pavel Monka in Polish-- that Pavel Monka broke the machine. That means it's a sabotage against the Third Reich.

One day, I was standing and working around. The Polish foreman who liked me very much came over to me, he says, Pavel, run. Run, because Gestapo is there. So I froze. My legs became like lead. I couldn't move, because I knew that something is funny, and I knew that I am involved here.

It's a good thing maybe that I didn't run. Because had I run through the fields, maybe they would shoot me dead. But this way, they came in, four big guys in black uniforms, taller than me, much taller than me. And they start beating me that I didn't know where I am. I really-- from all the sides. And the Poles-- everybody stopped working, you know? They're always scared. They could not believe that people can come in and beat up a guy like that.

And then later on, they took me into the car, and they took me to the Gestapo in Katowice. Katowice was the main city of Silesia. When I came, they brought me in front of an officer who was sitting at a big desk. And they made a column, like four and four Gestapo. And I walked through that little thing towards the desk, and they beat me tremendously with sticks, with clubs.

When I came to the desk, I really didn't know what I am and who I am. And this guy gets up and shouts at me, you made a sabotage against the Third Reich. You are a traitor. You know what we do with people like you. What do you have to say to that? So I said, I'm not guilty. I didn't do any sabotage.

I tried to explain little by little. With the words coming out of my mouth, that I didn't recognize my voice, even. I said to the Gestapo chief-- I said to him, I didn't do. I knew very well that if I say yes, they'll kill me immediately. If I say no, it's no good either. They couldn't get out of me a confession. They wanted me to sign a confession. They had printed a confession already for me. I did not want to sign it. So after a while, they put me into a cell. It was like you call it a solitary confinement.

Isolation.



Isolation. The water was about an inch high.

[WHISPERING]

I was so miserable. I was beaten up. I was swollen. I didn't feel my arms. I didn't feel my legs. I couldn't open up my mouth. And I said to myself, what am I going to do? I was thinking-- and my family didn't even know at that time what happened to me. But later on, when I came back from work, I understand my sister, who died in Italy after the war, she was sitting there for three days and nights waiting for my director to come back from Berlin.

Seven days. After that, I signed a confession. I couldn't take the punishment. I couldn't take the treatment. I couldn't eat. Even they gave me a little food, I couldn't eat, because my mouth was swollen. I couldn't close my mouth. And I was wet. Really, it was a torture like medieval times, probably, maybe worse.

After seven days, the door opens up, and I thought-- when I signed a confession, I thought that they going to take me out and shoot me. And I resigned to my fate. I said goodbye to my parents. I said goodbye to my brothers and sisters. I was in a state that I really didn't know actually what happened to me.

All of a sudden, the door opens up. They take me out from the cell. Instead of taking me to the court to shoot me-- because I heard from time to time some shots there, and they probably executed plenty of the prisoners-- I was brought to a hospital. I couldn't believe my luck. I was in a hospital. They put me in a bed.

A doctor comes over, examines me. He said, you'll be all right. Nothing serious, nothing happened to you. By the way, where did you fall in? He just joked with me, like. He thought I was in an accident. Maybe he knew, but he thought I don't, that to make believe that they're humane.

I was there for a couple weeks, actually, almost three weeks. There were 30 beds in the room where I was. One day, a guy comes over to me. His name was Yanek. He introduced himself to me. And he said, what is your name? So I said, Pavel Monka.

So he said to me, are you Jewish? I said yes. He says, you're a lucky guy as a Jew. We never saw a Jew here. He said, if you're Jewish and you survived this solitary confinement, then you will be a good man for us.

We'll stop at this point. We're going to change the tapes.