

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Father Francis Cegielka
October 2, 1990
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Father Francis Cegielka, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on October 10, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview cannot be used for sale in the Museum Shop. The interview cannot be used by a third party for creation of a work for commercial sale.

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FATHER FRANCIS CEGIELKA
October 2, 1990

Q: We are on camera. We have started to film. Would you tell me your full name please? Give me your name.

A: Father Francis Anthony Cegileka.

Q: Where were you born?

A: In Grabow, the province of Poznan, Poland. But Poland under occupation of German in 1908, we still lived under the German power.

Q: Father, if you would lean back and relax. I will move my chair forward if necessary so that you can hear me, but

A: We have started?

Q: We have started. It's important that you be comfortable.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Uh...Tell me about your family. How many people were in your family and what...

A: We were 9 children, five brothers and...uh...six brothers and three sisters. And...uh...we all had been educated first of all in the German schools and then since 1918, we had the opportunity to be taught in the Polish schools. And in my case I had to go to the college also and did then I studied theology in Rome, being called according to my judgment and conviction to the priesthood I had to study theology, philosophy and theology. And I entered the Society of the Catholic Apostolite, and after the first preparation, that is to say, grammar school, college...uh...after I have finished also philosophy in Poland, I was sent to Rome.

Q: Could we...could we back up a little bit? I'd like to know a little more before we go into those years.

A: Yes.

Q: About your childhood. When you were...uh...a young boy...uh...I'd like to know a little bit about what life was like for you and your parents as a young...as a young...when you were a young boy in Poland.

A: You see, when I was 6 years old, then I started the grammar school. Yet in...in 1918, we..we are very unhappy because of the war. And my father was convoked to the army as the officer because he was ordered the school, and did then in the first year of...uh... the battle

between German...German and Russian soldiers, he was taken into Russian captivity already in 1915 and he was there, which he knew Russian of course, so his conditions of life were not so difficult there. And the...the Russians have esteemed him and used him rather for the more secretarial work, not handwork. In 1918, he benefited and profited by the...uh... disorder because of the Russian Revolution and the _____. You see, just by his judgment he knew what to do and came to our family in 1918 and...uh...when Poland became independent, he also had to enter the Polish army. But after some months he came back home and continued his business work. He was an exporter of food to greater cities, also to Berlin, during the occupation of Poland by Germans. And so our conditions of life were rather good and we had the opportunity to be developed really in the atmosphere of a loving family. And when other members, my brothers and sisters heard about the my life's decision that I will go to priesthood, then they also sympathized with me and helped me really to reach that priesthood by their sympathy, by their prayers and so on. And so...and...uh...uh...in 1920, I went to the gymnasium of Naklo in Poland and...uh...there I was 2 years and then transferred to Wadowice to the high school of my society. And...uh...it was in the dioceses of Krakau. And...uh...then after I had finished the high school, I entered the preparatory school for priesthood and...uh...

Q: What made you decide to go on and to enter the preparatory school? Why did you become a priest? Want to become a priest?

A: You see there was in me some conviction that this is my way of life. It was not my decision, strictly speaking or theologically speaking, but some preparation from above. You see, we do believe in...uh...in our faith that all the vocations of priesthood for religious life come from God himself. And no doubt in order that this cause may mature, you may live a very dignified and religious also family. My parents were very faithful members of the church. All my brothers and sisters too. It was really the proper atmosphere. Also helping to deepen my conviction, there is my place. And did then after I finished philosophy, I was sent to Rome to the _____ University to study theology and...uh...to get a doctor degree in theology. So...uh...27 I went to Rome and for 4 years I studied there at the Gregorian university and at 31, I received the Priestly ordination and also my doctoral degree. And I went to Poland...back to Poland just to celebrate really my priesthood ordination in my...uh...parish where my family lived. And then my professor who became Rector of Polish Catholic Mission in France, he came also for the celebration of my priesthood in my parish where he was a vicar and then invited me to come to Paris just to help in his Secretariat. My superiors have allowed, and I spent the first year of my priesthood in France. Then 32 came back to Poland and start...and taught...uh...the proper ____ in minor college and then in the superior classes. It was 4...uh...24. Yes, that's right. 24 and 28, first in the first classes of colleges and then superior classes. And in 1938...uh...the Primate of Poland, Archbishop of Poznan who was also Director of the...uh...Polish Catholic Mission outside Poland, he was asked by my former professor, Director of Polish Catholic mission, that my superiors may help...may really allow me to come again to France and work there. And...uh...I was working for some time and...uh...then in 1938, my superior, former teacher of Latin, has resigned and the Primate has nominated me as superior of the Polish Catholic Mission, that is to say of the

Pastoral care of all Poles in Poland. And we had there are about 50 priests who worked for the Polish people only, and as a young Priest I became a Superior of them. Traveling from place after place during summer. It was some days in which I remember some Polish parish has celebrated some feast and so I visited also in this way the territory of France. And then ...then when the war came, _____ to France, 1939, we have really also suffered much. And then...then suffered much because...especially because Germans...Germany has occupied Paris. And...uh... here really is my great, I would say, _____ for _____ for martyrdom because in...on October 26, 1940 ...uh...Gestapo came to the Polish Catholic Mission in Paris and told me, "Gentleman." He didn't call me father. "We have in possession all of your sermons which you delivered to the French radio to the Polish people against our German system. You will not be free anymore. This is the day that we make really the end to your freedom. You come with us and we will place you in the prison of Paris." You see 26...26th of October 1940, I was arrested and placed then in prison in Paris. And then there I was...from October 26th to November 26th, 1940. That is to say, in the Paris, Parisian...Parisian prison.

Q: Father, don't...don't worry about dates. Truly.

A: Yes.

Q: Tell...tell me why you had been arrested. The Gestapo referred to radio programs.

A: You see...

Q: Tell me.

A: Because...because they collected my radio sermons and believed that I am great enemy of Nazis, and they have not tolerated...you see people also in France who would say something against them, for the Nazis, for the Gestapo. You see their system was sacred. Nobody had the right to offend them. And then I always remained with the same conviction.

Q: What had you been saying on the radio?

A: Well, that Nazism, Hitlerism is not only an enemy of Jewish people, but they are also anti-Christian system. That is to say, not only a system to purify Germany from Jewish population, but also to not _____ with us. It was impossible for them, but to take really under their influence the whole Catholic church. And then...so in my radio sermons, as I told you enlighten by the French government, I consoled the Polish people already occupied by Nazi Germany that Nazism really must collapse because it is not only anti-Jewish system, but anti-Christian and human system. Everything what was for us dignified, you see, was just condemned by Nazis, rejected by Hitlerism. And do not forget I told them that the whole world is not dependant of Nazis, but God is taking care of us. And so do not cooperate. Do not get discouraged. You will suffer no doubt, but in your suffering you will find always our sympathy and the sympathy of the whole Europe. And because, you see, of this tax of this

approach to Hitlerism I was not allowed to live as a free person. So they considered me as an Enemy No. 1. And then from Paris after 1 month of being in prison, I was just transferred...transferred to Berlin, and on my way to _____ in Berlin, I was few days in Trier, _____, Hanover, and came to Berlin on December the 10, 1940...1940 to Berlin, _____. And really that _____ in Berlin was a place of torture. And...uh...you see no freedom. Just closed in the cell and...uh...I was really free only 2 times a month to take some part in the _____ of all the prisoners. Twice a month I was able to leave the cell. Otherwise, cell was my unique, only place to live. But in...uh...the week which we called Holy Week, I was really taken into the black cell, that is to say without a light, without a light, without water, without anything, and there was a left there for 6 days. That is to say, imagine only you have no possibility to look through the window because everything was closed. You didn't have any possibility to take water or some...take some food because they didn't bring it to you. After this Holy Week, I was really exhausted. But this was not sufficient for them. You see, they...I suppose they tried just to kill me, and they came at the end and felt...treated me so cruelly that I was fully exhausted and perhaps it seemed to them that I am not living any more, but to be sure they took me to the hospital where conditions were certainly not easy but better than the prison. So after some days I have recuperated and then they have taken me back to the _____. But with more normal conditions of life. That is to say, I have received the regular food as other prisoners, but only with the privilege to leave for the Primate twice a month. And from _____ I was from December 10, 40. On July 29, 41, I left Berlin _____ and then transferred to the camp of Sachsenhausen close to Berlin. And then I came to Sachsenhausen on July 29th, 41, and was there to February the 3rd, 1942. And there I was also...uh...well, what I say, exhausted. You see because the conditions in the camp of concentration are not easy or were not easy. Neither here nor there. And so after 3 weeks in the hospital, I was for them fit to be transported to Dachau.

- Q: Okay. Let's stop a moment. If you could. I want to put this down. Can we stop and pause the tape a moment please. Uh...Steven, are you there? Can you...we're having sawing or hammering of some kind coming through. Would you please?
- A: Okay, Father we are back on camera. You had wanted to tell us the dates of where you were on each place.
- Q: But I have already told you. Yes. And we came to Sachsenhausen and in Sachsenhausen I was from July 29, 41 to February, the 3rd, 1942. And then I was transferred to Dachau to the prisons of Kothen, Leipzig, and Nuremberg. And on February the 13th, 1942, I came to Dachau. And...uh...finally, we shall speak about it later, on Sunday, April 29, 1945, we were liberated. Yes. But in Sachsenhausen, you see, the conditions were not as cruel as in Dachau. And I spent there some time just...uh...doing things as other prisoners and particularly taking care of cleaning the roads and the streets in concentration camp. Deprived of any liberty! And then...then, of course, I was not beaten there as the other prisoners. And so I still was able to continue my life in the concentration camps. In Dachau, it was really not easy to live and to survive because as the renowned French politician _____ wrote in his book, he was also in Dachau, and in his book, _____ Liberate Root of Liberty, he says in that book that the

Dachau for him was an organized Hell. And you see if somebody very intelligent person really writes so that not only for him, but for all the people, it was really life in Hell, without any hope, without peace, without liberty. You have been considered just there as a mechanical instrument, moved here and there. And...uh...in my case as the Polish priest, also, we had to work everyday in this so called plantation. And the...the work was really not easy and then every day, every day the same work. And without enough food. And then with the spirit of persecution you see. All those Gestapo people who really tried to direct our work, we our not human and..uh.. although...although they were very...uh...I would say...uh...against all of us. Yet we tried to avoid their discipline you see. And we did when they have...when they have...uh...come to us, we tried to do our best. When they disappeared, we just relaxed. And so they didn't have the true judgment of our work, but when they have seen that we really were not working what they have beaten us. And you see, some Gestapo people were very cruel without any sense of justice and the mocked kindness. And many people beaten, and the plantation had to be transferred to the so-called hospital in Dachau. And there the Gestapo men finished them. You see, there was a hospital in Dachau. I was there also for...uh...some days just to heal my wounds here on the legs. And...uh...we didn't have the true conditions which a sick person should have in the hospital. You see, they treated us just as some living instrument and moved us here and there, also without the proper food. But in those conditions, it was really very important to have a firm will and peace of heart. How was it possible to find peace of heart in such conditions? And I answered just by your faith. You see, if you believed in God, in his not only justice, but also Law, then you knew that you are under his protection and if he permits all that suffering to us, it is also on the basis that we, the mortal priest, are co-responsible for the salvation of the other people. And you cannot be safe according to our gospel, but taking also part in some suffering. St. Paul in his Epistles tells us that our Lord has suffered for us and they offered to God that suffering, but in order that the suffering may be a stripe to us, we had to complete also that suffering by giving our part. And so if you have such faith that your suffering really can bring some fruit to you, to your brethren, then you have found also energy and strength to survive. And...uh...we say very often that suffering can break or make you. It can break you if you see nonsense in the suffering, but if you find out that there is some value also of suffering and because of this in the popular language, we say that it can make you...it can make you stronger. The more so stronger if you are a believer. If you think that everything is under the divine control. And in this faith and in this spirit you can really energize also your body and bring more peace for your daily life.

Q: How did that help you in Dachau? What was in...in Dachau, how did your faith help you. What...what kind of things did you do in Dachau?

A: You see, it was really...very great danger to lose faith in Dachau. If your faith was not firm. Why? Because the German Bishop have received from Himmler the privilege that he has also given to the German priest a chapel, and they had the possibility to have their prayers, devotions, masses, and so on, but under one condition: no one accept German priests were allowed to take part all of the devotions performed in the chapel. But here the danger for some people...you see some people really intended, not only priests but lay people, intended

to go to the chapel and pray a little. But there was a custodian, the priest, who according to the order of Gestapo was not allowed to...any body to enter a chapel. And so the lay people said, "Well, how can I believe if this minister of God is so cruel just not to allow me to go to the chapel for a spiritual comfort? and obeys rather a Gestapo order and not God's way. We have to answer, "There are also ___ people among the priest who act not according to their conscious, but according to the order received from the civil authority." But in order to replace for our use chapel here and there when we were not specially...specially controlled by Gestapo, we formed really little group of people, and consoled each other and prayed with each other and so some little common utarian groups have been formed. And also it was...uh..for us also a joy when some priest custodian, not allowing according to the order of Gestapo enter the chapel to...not German priest, that he has just closed his eyes and allowed us to enter. And then so from time to time it was also for us a spiritual consolation to pray and this chapel was reserved only for German priests and...uh...well some priests were so friendly to us that they also brought to us some part of the Holy whole. You know what it means? Yes. And so we were...uh...also not only consoled by strength you see, by this sacramental help and assistance. So you must say that the German priests tried to help us also, but too many were fearful and fearful...and...for example, to such an extent, that they say, "No, I will not do it. I cannot." When I was really in Berlin in the hospital after this torture of the Holy Week then some men who took care of us sick people...uh...he, knowing that I am priest, said, "Well, if you so wish I can prepare for you perhaps the possibility to say Mass." And I said, "I would be so grateful to you, but you must ask the priest, the chaplain to give you all the instruments and say...for saying Mass. I approached the prison, say Father and told him, "Father," I have all the opportunities for saying Mass here without being controlled by anybody in some secret place. Will you be so kind and give me everything that is necessary for celebrating." And he said, "Father, I am too afraid. Do you think that I should expose myself to go to Dachau?" "Never mind." You see, we had also such sadness, such opportunities that on the one hand you had the possibility to be strengthened spiritually. On the other hand, fearful people who could help you and that chaplain was really...I would say very cranky even. He feared too much the Gestapo, and even Dachau. If really somebody is in the need spiritual...spiritual need I should help him, also if I will be exposed to some suffering. We all are members of one family. And members which should help one another. And so this spirit you see of common utarian sympathy assistance was lacking also in Dachau, but as a rule we must say that all the priests except those that were in the German block for priests...uh...with some exception of course...all other priests tried to help each other. And...uh...so in this case, we can also understand why we have survived being helped, assisted by others, although not materially but spiritually. By this assistance, we really received new energy for survival. So then after many months...you see, at the end of 1944, we have received the privilege to receive packages from our parents. And then really we have received many packages our families. They tried to do their best in order to send us packages with the necessary...uh...food in order to strengthen us. And as a rule, Gestapo has allowed us to accept to receive all the packages and so from October 1944 til the end of the concentration camp on Sunday, 29th, we really became stronger people. And we may say prepared for liberty not to go from concentration camp even to hospital or to some other institution. So packages sent us by our parents really were a great blessing for

us. And one thing, we priests, Polish priests, noticed that packages sent by our Mothers came intact without corruption. And then from other members of families, here and there there was food and damage by this or other conditions. And so one idea came to a priest and he composed a beautiful song in honor of our mothers and we sang, you see, this song, really giving not only our thanks but expressing our deepest affection to our mothers to our family also, but especially to our mothers. And so we, on this occasion, started also our psychology, and came to conclusion that really love for a mother is the deepest mother besides the love for a God. And then also this renewal I would say of that...uh...uh...love for our mother, with the food, really made us more normal people. And...uh.. when I was also in Dachau in...uh...in the hospital for some days, one priest was dying and called, "Mother," in such despair. "My dearest Mother." I approached him and told him, "Father, be consoled. You will find the blessed mother in Heaven." And he said, "Father, do you understand the deep love of a dying person for a mother?" And I said, "Well, I was not in this state of dying yet, but I understand that Mother really counts as the great consolation in the last moment of life." You see, we perhaps have not realized enough what great really strength is our love for a mother, and the love of Mother for us. Mother lives for her children. Not always children live for their mothers. But our suffering, for example, in this case in Dachau really renewed in us the worthiness. There is no greater love after our love for God, than the love for our mother which is not always developed, but different occasions can really develop to such an extent that it will become strength and renewed energy for us. So then came the blessed day of...uh...April 29.

Q: Can we hold it a minute. I would like not to get to the liberation yet. I would like to go back for a moment.

A: Yes.

Q: You have mentioned being in the hospital several times. Could you tell us about the events that led up to your being in the hospital and you told me an extraordinary story before. Tell us about that.

Q: You see, when we speak of the hospital in Dachau or in Sachsenhausen then we should not believe that the name of hospital was identical with the conditions of a civilized hospital. You were there only an instrument...uh...which really received here...here and there some care, but most minimal. When you came to hospital, then all the people who took care of the sick people believed you came here to die. And so if you didn't have the interior strength and the...the hope to survive, the little food which you have received was not able to help you to survive that. And so many people really died there and how many? Well, for example, in Dachau 868 Polish priests perished. Eight hundred sixty eight, and 3 of them...200 of them in the medical experiments, by torture in the prison _____. And the Polish clergy Dachau order no. clergy of ordination, we were 1,718 numbers....1,718. And as I already told you, 868 were...died, and was martyred, of course. And...uh...then we must say that the...uh...priests slowly...at the end of 1944 received really some better conditions of life to such an extent that they have received also a permission that a French Bishop who was there also in Dachau

has ordained a gentleman deacon to the priesthood. You see, unheard...

Q: Did you see the ordination?

A: Yes, I...we did. Yes.

Q: Okay. Please. Put...put that down.

A: And it was Karla Lisner, Deacon Karl Lisner. He was ordained by the French Bishop.

Q: Tell us about that ordination as you saw it.

A: Well, for us it was great day not only because we witnessed the ordination of that Karl Lisner, but because we really...uh...have...have experienced some spiritual atmosphere. You see, when you are deprived of any spiritual assistance and help and ordinary conditions of human dignified life, when you take part in such a great ceremony then you are liberated really and strengthened. And perhaps in our materialistic times, we do not realize...uh...what kind of help and assistance we are losing, becoming indifferent to all the religious exercises and so on. In that...in that...uh...concentration camp when, for example, such occasions happened that we had the possibility to assist during the Mass or before the Moment in the chapel or in this case, to be witnesses of the ordination. Oh, this was really a day of great spiritual elevation.

Q: The Germans permitted this ordination?

A: You see, it was already...already 1944, as I said. He was ordained...ordained by the bishop in December 44, and from October 1944, we had already better conditions because of food we have received from our families. So this is the case.

Q: You had started...we sort of got off the track a little bit to tell about your experience in the hospital. How did you come to be in the hospital in the first place?

A: You see, because work in...in the plantation, I collapsed out of exhaustion. And so I was unable to walk, to move. So the so-called Kapo, you see of that group of people in which I also worked, ordered some people to bring some...uh...uh...car that I may be transferred to the hospital. And so I suppose that the reason, the only reason was the exhaustion. And...uh...I didn't...didn't get much medical help, but I had the possibility to relax, to be free from the work. And did then also after some days, the possibility to approach the other prisoners also sick and console and strengthen them. And so in some case, it was not only a blessing for me to be there in the hospital but also for those who needed also some advice, some help, some encouragement and so on because many sick people out of exhaustion, of being deprived of any assistance, help and encouragement died. Or if they didn't die, they die yet, then they were more murdered and burned in the crematorium.

Q: You had said also you were in the hospital another time for your legs.

A: Yes. That's right.

Q: Could you tell us about that?

A: Uh...This was just only some hour in which I was there. There had seen what happened and given me some...uh...I would say means to stop the blood and so on and to cover all the wounds. I was there really for some hours to get some help, some assistance, but you see if you...if you did then have some inner strength and I would say...uh...desire to survive and to overcome all sufferings...also the very little sickness would you suffer, brought you to crematorium. You see when you speak of Dachau, then you just cannot think of normal conditions of human life. The more so of the proper conditions in the hospitals. They had to reopen also hospitals you see because well the human eye needed it and international opinion also. So many, so many, I would say, people knew about all these things and conditions in the concentration camps, then they just try also to visit or show here we also hospital we care of the sick people, but the visitors didn't have any possibility to talk with us, to speak to us, to ask how do you feel. And on the day if some visit was...uh...really programmed in the hospital, then they have prepared better food, for the eyes you see. But really inhuman conditions.

Q: Tell us about that. Were you...uh...ever beaten and tortured in Dachau?

A: You see, not tortured but perhaps not taken care of. This was the case. And so, for example, if...if I was weak because of exhaustion, then they have not tortured me there in Dachau. Perhaps because I was priest. But they didn't assist me. You had to just take care of yourself. And other people if they really were sick, they became victims of torture. Many, many people really just disappeared because the Gestapo inflicted such great and did suffering to them that they had to finish their life. So conditions which were not human you see, and because of this you can understand why the many also writers, as I have quoted _____, the French writer, why they have spoken of Dachau as of the organized Hell. And many people really died and tortured in Dachau. I told you about, for example, Polish priest. We were there 1,718 and 868 perished. That is to say, died. And...uh...300 of them..uh..died because of tortured suffered in the medical experiments. The doctors tried to see what they can expect from...from...uh..., for example, if the tortured such person to such an extent or another one. You see, we are experimental people. And...uh...we must say that... uh...the German priest were rather more protected than we, the priest of other nationalities and the more so lay people. But some people knew how to organize also their lives and survive in better conditions. This is the case. And so then came the day of liberation.

Q: At this point, we pause. We need to pause here and we will change tapes and then we will talk about liberation.

TAPE #2

A: Yes.

Q: Let us go back. If you would put that down. I would like to ask you now that the tape is on.

A: Yes.

Q: The questions I asked I asked you when the tape was off.

A: Yes. Yal.

Q: Uh...Could you tell me first, please, how you went about...uh...saying confession in Dachau.

A: You see.

Q: Yes. You're on.

A: We heard confession just by walking with some person who asked us for this privilege or we were hidden in some corner of the concentration camp because to hear confessions...you see it was really for the Gestapo some cause of a torture, and we tried to help the people that really in such way that these are _____ became the victims of torture. And, also, during the work when we were not controlled by Gestapo, some people came to us and...uh...working a little, we have heard their confession and of course, tried to help them, strengthen them, to deepen their faith, confidence. And then, you see, one thing that you can communicate with another person and share, things which are great interest for you is most helpful, particularly in such conditions in which we lived in...in Dachau. And...uh...because of this we must say and repeat again that suffering can break, but also make you. Through suffering you can benefit so much that you can have an idea of it only after you finish your way of the cross. And...uh...this is really so that we may open our eyes more fully to the mysteries of our life, to the mysteries of our destiny, and then in our Christian life to complete what is wrong thing of the suffering of Christ for us. YOU see, Christ, according to our faith, has paid the majority of the price for the ticket to Heaven, but on the condition that we also give our part that the price may be made fuller. If we are not interested in it, then the precious suffering of Christ for us, for you, for...a person is lost.

Q: In Dachau, how did you help comfort people? Was this legal and open in the daytime or did you have to do it illegally and secretly?

A: Uh...Secretly. It was not allowed legally to bring to the people some religious comfort. You see, Nazi's most really diabolical system, trying to finish with faith, with religion and annihilate, everything what was not Hitlerism. It's a totalitarian system, and then anti-Christian among the religious and no doubt that the Jewish people suffered really many losses but it was also and so because for Hitler, Judaism was a religion and then after finishing Judaism,

they would like to finish Christianity. But they didn't have the possibility of it. You see there was a diabolical system _____.

Q: How did you go about trying to bring comfort? What did you do?

A: Well, you see, first of all, then we have offered to them a promise to help if we can and this are another case because they came to also with some difficulties in their work, in their lives.

Q: The other prisoners you mean?

A: Yes.

Q: Yal.

A: And so if you can help me, well how and this way or another. And then particularly to...they came to receive some spiritual help, spiritual assistance that is to say to revive their faith that we live not only here on earth. This is only prelude to our eternal happiness, which we should deserve also by our suffering. And...uh...for some people there was also the question, "Why should a God permit such suffering?" You see, why? He is God. And so we had to explain to them that suffering, as such, is a part of our life. That Hitler has brought to us such really tremendous suffering, it is really his guilt, his responsibility and for us, and the patient to suffer it as much as we can for our greater and _____. You see nothing happens in the history of humankind without the permission of the _____ of the divine providence. Nothing can happen. And so we must say, "But why God permits sufferings?" Well, this is for the cure. We should really admit it that sometimes we come in our life to such better development that no other medical, physical or spiritual, can be helpful to us except suffering because in the days and or hours of sufferings we really came to the better...uh...recognitions of our conditions of life. And there is also an opportunity for the renewal of our faith. And...uh...uh...the opportunity to strength our whole. My suffering will be rewarded there. Here is a temporary only pilgrimage for me. There will be eternity. And so your faith, you see, was the greatest help in overcoming your suffering, despair, and to collapse. Without your spirit strength, it was impossible just not to collapse. Our body has very limited energy and if that body is not energized by our spirit and some reasonable explanation of your position or your suffering, then there is no hope of survival.

Q: Did you come into contact with non-Christians while you were in Dachau?

A: Uh...Very rarely, because you see that they had separated the Jews and...uh...other Muslims, if they were there, from us. And it was only accidentally that we met, for example, some Jews or some Muslims. And otherwise you see Christian people were not so limited in their liberty to communicate as we with non-Christians.

Q: Alright. You had started to tell us you...what happened as liberation approached.

A: Yes.

Q: What.

A: You see then in April we all remained in 45...we already heard of the victory of anti-German...uh...German soldiers, in the battlefields, and it was for us also a great help and assistance for strengthening our bodies, our minds, and our lives. But slowly in April...in April, we noticed that German soldiers really are collapsing on the front, receiving here or there some information and then we have also heard that the American soldiers are approaching ___and so also Dachau. And...uh...some movement...uh...of the Gestapo people in Dachau on April 28 told us that really the American army is approaching. And you see all the Gestapo people and controllers of our blocks left their place and we remained alone without indigilence. So we left our blocks, not going to work, and tried to come to the big public place of our official reunions. And that's one moment this approaching one soldiers to the tower and slowly, the Germans soldiers you see do not defend him to enter the concentration camp knowing that they are lost already. So the first soldier, American soldier you see, who came there to Dachau was a lady, and she was Miss. Margaret Higgins of Washington Post or New York Times, and she was such tremendously benevolent lady. We didn't recognize her as a lady and so everybody has kissed her and embraced her. She also and finally reunion, but finally, she said, "I am a lady in the sold...in the soldier's uniform," but don't fear. I am here just to help you as much as I can. And so we sang hymns of her thanksgiving to that lady. For us at that time, the great liberator. That is to say she came to us really as the representative of the American army, and after our first congratulations and songs of Hallulah...uh...other American soldiers entered Dachau and what did they do? Brought many cars of food. And so we all have been invited to come and take as much as we only wished. It was a glorious day. And you see for some people it was the dangerous day because they had eaten too much and collapsed. You just cannot change your system, you see, so rapidly. But you just...uh...uh... should admit one thing. That your body is just asking you to fill it with food and food. If you have not guided your knowledge and with your mind, well you have taken too much. And then after the glorious day, we have...uh...received also the permission to prepare ourselves for leaving...uh...Dachau. And what that means, you have disposal to ask. And the...the French...French... uh...Consul from Paris sent really to...uh...Dachau some cards and in one card they have invited me also to join them, the Parisians, and come back to Paris. And so it was a victorious day. And because of the packages which I have received from my family as other prisoners do, I was strong enough just to take again my office of Director of Polish Catholic Mission and function there and liberate the priest who helped...suffered for me with great, really willingness to do whatever he was able to do. And so already at...uh...uh...I...I would say...at the end of Spring we really have recuperated fully and continued our work. Some people still trying to find means, for example, the Poles to come back to Poland; other group to Italy and so on. I was personally in this good position that I was stable to reach Paris...uh...some 3 or 4 days after liberation and...uh...live my normal life. But having possibility I tried to use them to bring also help to other people in Dachau and help them or assist them in their return to their places. And so

Friday was the end of our real remarkable which for men became only torture one after the other, and many really ...uh...died and didn't survive to experience the date of liberation. Such is the case.

Q: Indeed. If you're are in Paris and your story is not over.

A: Not over.

Q: You're in Paris and you, I gather, was not in quite Paris either. The Communists didn't like you you told me.

A: Yes. You see...

Q: Tell me.

A: I continued my work for two years. But being free and...uh..in agreement with the French government, I tried to purify the Polish parishes in France from any Communistic influence. And...uh...to such an extent slowly...uh...uh...the General Council of Polish Communistic Government, you see, went to...uh...uh...the First Minister of French Government...uh...saying that I am just intolerable, that I persecute the peaceful people. And so some person was sent to me just to find out what is the matter. And I told him, "Well, you see, such is the case that we were not only against the Nazis, but also against Communist. And for us Communists was also intolerable. And there are so many, so many communistic delegates from Russia to Polish groups that I had to defend our Polish citizens against this infiltration of communistic sick... sickness." And then I really never allowed to infiltrate in our Polish organization...we never allowed the communists to really bring to them some damage. And I have received the answer of the communist...the French government congratulations. Yes. The former anti-really to hide the people that they may not become victims of communists, but now you see the...no photographs here. The communists...the communists after they have not received any help from ...from French government and to pacify me, they went to the upper story to delegate. And what did they do? They told him, "Your Excellency. Certainly Christianity can develop only in peaceful conditions of co-living and that this present _____ and you must correct him or even dismiss him." And so after the...uh...uh... communistic country left, the upper story delegates, the delegate of delegate, the future Pope...uh...jumped when he heard, call me and asked, "Father, what is the matter? I have received here so many accusations that you do not allow the people to live in peace and calm." And I said, "Of course. We must now purify our ranks from communistic...communistic influence." "And what about your relationship with the Polish government?" "I do not acknowledge the communistic government and the Consul General who...uh...calls himself Polish General Consul, is for me not any representative of Polish government because this Polish government is fully and entirely strange to our Polish...uh...people. And I will never allow to...the communists to infiltrate our Polish ranks." And he said, "Well, you are responsible for your conditions of life, but try only not to offend them." And I said, "Well, the...these communists personally will never be offended by

me in my conversation, in my repression, and so on." And I told the _____ delegate, "If the communistic consul general comes to our church...uh...to the Polish church, I will accept him really as the faith will. I will also hear his confession. And so be sure that in the matter of religion, those communists will not be persecuted. If they would like to become really faithful to the church, they will have all the opportunities barred to bring the communistic poison to our Polish ranks will be excluded, but you see when the communistic ambassador didn't succeed to pacify me, going to the French government, and then...uh...to the upper story...to delegate, they went to the Provincial Superior of my Province in Warsaw. And they said, "If you do not dismiss Father Cegiela from the office of the Superior of Polish Catholic Mission, we will close your houses. And the Provincial answered, "He is not subject to me in his office. He was nominated by the Cardinal _____, the Prime of the Poland. And so I have no power. I cannot do anything." And so the communists have understood that he cannot do anything and cannot just send me away from my office. So they went to the General and said, "If you do not dismiss this man from the office in Paris, that will be end of...uh...many priests in Poland." And so the General...the General

Q: The General of your order?

A: Yes. The General wrote to me saying, "Father, you see I have received such bad news that they will close many things which are dear to us. Our schools, institution, and so on. And perhaps it would be advisable that you will ask the Primate to...uh...free you from that office." And so because it was the interest of the society which I belonged, I asked Primate just to free me from this office and he...he received...has written me letter, "Father, with great really sadness, I must really give you the possibility to leave your office of the Polish...of the Director of the Polish Catholic Mission, but I take this with a great sorrow because you are needed so much here." So after he wrote me this letter, I really asked him to nominate his successor. And he said the best thing would be that he who has helped the Polish mission during your concentration camp, may now take that...uh...office instead of your __. You see this was the case of the decision to send me to honorary camp. That is to say I was unable to go back to Poland. Unable also to work in France because they would...they communists would have suspicioned that I just had left...left my office, but still not being officially called Director, I still infiltrate all the possibility...possibility sections and bring...bring really for them great losses. So the General asked me to come to Rome for some months. I was helping him a little here and there, and then from America he has received some petitions from...uh...congregations of Sisters to send some priest to America who would give them retreats. You know what a treat is? Yes. And so he asked me whether I would go. "Of course, if you wish." And so I came to America. And being here, I was invited...uh...to give retreats in many places so I was traveling from place to place. I was even asked to come to South Africa. Twice I was there. And to Canada. And always busy, busy _____. And after 20 years of giving retreats, you see, I had to...uh...relax because of the constant traveling and in 1968, I received the position of Proper Sorrow, of college person _____ and then in Philadelphia was teaching, and teaching the students in colleges. I was also composing a special manuals, you see, to help them just not only to hear, but to read and when they read the material which we have explained to them and really accept some Christian education

and Christian philosophy in college. And...uh...during the last years of my teaching, I received some special privilege. That is to say, in 72 and something 70, I was nominated as outstanding educator of America, a honor for me. Yes. And...uh...then I had to stay with my society _____, and I now am the Director of Infant Jesus Shrine. That is to say some charter to which come pilgrimages...uh...and get also some spiritual help. So this would be the end. Thank you so very kindly.

Q: Father, thank you very, very much.

A: Thank you so much.

Q: You are very special.

A: Thank you for renewed thanks and for your patience.