

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Norbert Krasnosielski
November 24, 2009
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Norbert Krasnosielski, conducted by Nahum Krasnosielski on November 24, 2009 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.

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NORBERT KRASNOSIELSKI

November 24, 2009

Question: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Nahum Krasnosielski**, conducted by **Ina Navazelskis** on November 24, 2009 at the Holocaust Museum in **Washington, D.C.** Thank you Mr. **Krasnosielski** for coming today to talk to us.

Answer: Thank you very much, I am very glad to see you here.

Q: Okay. We will start, as we always do in our interviews, from the beginning. I'd like to get a sense of where you were born, what your family was like, who was your father, who was your mother, where did you grow up. So tell me about your childhood, your early years.

A: I wanted to tell you that in the first part of my biography, that I have written in Polish, all these details are there, but I will try to repeat some of them.

Q: Thank you.

A: I am born January the 25th, 1918. So, I have 91 years.

Q: You don't look it at all.

A: Thank you very much.

Q: And where were you born?

A: I am born in a small town, at this time, **Nikopol', Dnipropetrovs'ka Oblast'**.

Q: Oh, so that's in eastern **Ukraine**.

A: This is eastern **Ukraine**. **Zaporosh'ye**, which is very popular in Polish literature.

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Q: Mm-hm.

A: There were the Cossacks and the – the – the front of [**indecipherable**] and many other events. Now, **Nikopol'** is a lot bigger, an industrial city in **Ukraine**.

Q: An industrial city in the **Ukraine**. Hang on just a minute. When did you leave the **Ukraine**?

A: If I can remember, probably in 1921 –

Q: What are you –

A: – when I was three years old.

Q: Do you have any early memories at all?

A: No, I have some memories, because in a small town, not far from **Nikopol'**, the town **Kakhovka** was living a mm-mm – **o-omotat** – **omotologist(ph)**, my father's brother, **Krasnosielski** too.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And he has two daughters there. We didn't have any big contacts with him, because we lived in **Poland**, and they didn't leave **Kakhovka**, and were continuing to live in **Ukraine**.

Q: I see. Tell me a little bit about your father and your mother.

A: My mother was a **tsohn(ph)** doctor, and my father was a **tsohn(ph)** doctor.

Q: What's a **tsohn(ph)** doctor?

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A: Teeth.

Q: Teeth, ah, he's a dentist.

A: A dentist, yes.

Q: I see.

A: My mother was a dentist, my father was a dentist and two my father's brothers were dentists, too.

Q: A dentist family.

A: Yes, a dentist family.

Q: And what, at that point, when you moved to **Nesvzh**, was it part of **Poland**, or part of **Belarussia**?

A: Well, we came to **Nesvzh**, we changed our country from Soviet **Russia** to **Poland**, where both of my parents were citizens of **Poland**.

Q: How did they become citizens of **Poland**? Were they from there originally?

A: They were born in **Poland**.

Q: Ah.

A: Because this part of **Poland** belonged to tsarist **Russia**.

Q: **Russia**. Of course, of course. And so, what prompted them to move to **Nesvzh** in 1921?

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A: The great [**indecipherable**] connected with the revolution in **Russia**, made the life very hard, and many Jews at this time, who had citizenship from another country, tried to go there. And because my father was born in **Nesvizh**, and my mother was born in **Wilno**, so both were born at the territory of **Poland**.

Q: Yes. Yes. Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: I don't have any sisters and any brothers. One of my brothers died at the age of six years, probably from hunger in time of revolution.

Q: So he was older than you?

A: He was older than I am, but he died before my birthday.

Q: I see. So, did you grow up as an only child?

A: Yes.

Q: I see. [**tape break**]

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with **Norbert Nahum Krasnosielski**. So, we were talking about your childhood, your – the family's move from nepr – **Dnipropetrovs'ka** to **Nesvizh**.

A: **Nikopol'**

Q: **Niko** – from **Nikopol'** –

A: **Nikopol'**. **Dnipropetrovs'ka** is the county.

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Q: Ah, from **Nikopol'** to **Nesvizh**, and that you were an only child and that you come from a family of dentists, basically. Mother, father, uncles. And is that what they did in **Nesvizh**? Is that what they beg – continued their professional life?

A: Unfortunately, it came to a divorce, and I left myself with my mother.

Q: I see.

A: My father went to **Vilnius**, and he was the head of the **Vilnius** Zionist organization.

Q: That's quite interesting. Did you visit him there? Did you have contact with him?

A: Very seldom, but yes. He wanted to come back to my mother, but he was a **Cohain**.

Q: What's a **Cohain**?

A: A **Cohain** is a section of religious beliefs, and a **Cohain** can't come back to his former wife.

Q: What a contradiction for him.

A: Yes. And when I met him in **Vilnius**, I heard that he said to my mother [**speaks foreign language here**]

Q: What does that mean?

A: Around me are criminals. And he –

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Q: What was he referring to? What do you think he was referring to?

A: He died at the age of 47 years, because of some events from the time of revolution, he ate something that it is forbidden to eat. And he had with his stomach a very hard illness, and he died in **Vilnius** at 47 years.

Q: And what – what year do you th – did he die? Do you remember? Was it – how old were you at the time?

A: I was probably 15 years old.

Q: Oh, so it was in the 30s he died?

A: Yes.

Q: And what are – what are the memories of your father that you have? What kind of a person was he?

A: My memories of my father are maybe for me interesting. He had **snihas**(ph) **afrabonis**(ph). It means he had a document that he can be a **rof**(ph), a **raggi**(ph).

Q: Oh, really?

A: Yes. And he taught at one of the famous **yeshivot**.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: In **Vilnius**?

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A: No. Probably, or in **Glatzk**(ph) or in **Mier**(ph), one of the two cities with very big synagogues, and many people were coming to study there from **America**, from all the world. And when my mother was angry on him, she said **utchi**(ph) **saleeshka**(ph).

Q: He's a teacher at –

A: A small teacher, **utchi**(ph) **saleeshka**(ph).

Q: Women know how to get it to a man, they really do. So – so, what's important for you is that he nevertheless had this kind of experience, this kind of bent, this – this direction. What about personally? Did you feel close to him?

A: From time to time he was sending me Hebrew books, because for one year I was in a Hebrew school, **Farwood** in **Nesvizh**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And the memories of **Nesvizh** are the most living memories for me.

Q: Tell me about them.

A: There were my best friends. There – there were my best friend's girls. And **Nesvizh** played a very big role in my –

Q: Life.

A: – development.

Q: I see.

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A: Yeah.

Q: So tell me – tell me then about your mother. What was she like? Did she start dentistry? Did she then become – have her own practice? How did she raise you?

A: It was very hard, and her friends said that she is a **bearyai**(ph).

Q: And what does that mean?

A: A **bearyai**(ph) in Hebrew, it is a lady who knows how to do everything.

Q: Were they right?

A: Yes. And well, in **Vilnius** was hard with earning –

Q: That's right. A living.

A: Es-Especially after 1929.

Q: Why was this an – after 1929?

A: After 1929 begin the great depression in **America**.

Q: That's right.

A: And **Nesvizh** received a lot of money from Jews who came from **Nesvizh** to **America** years ago. And in time of this crisis, they began to stop to finance the Jewish community.

Q: Ah.

A: So, my mother said to me – I was already 15 - 16 years old, so she said, maybe we will go to a small town where there is no dentist.

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Q: So there were already dentists in **Nesvizh**, there was too much competition?

A: Yes. And she said, you will be the geographer. You will find someplace to go.

And I found for her a place, a small town, **Landvarooof(ph)**.

Q: **Landvarooof(ph)**, is that on this map?

A: I don't know if it is, **Landvarooof(ph)**, close to **Vilnius**.

Q: It's close to **Vilnius**, uh-huh.

A: Yeah. Yes. It – it – it is here. It is in 10 kilometers on the line **Vilnius, Warsaw**.

Q: **Lukaradishkis(ph)** is what it says here on the map. **[indecipherable]** is different.

A: **[indecipherable]** probably they call it different.

Q: Yes.

A: In Polish this **Landvarooof(ph)**.

Q: **Landvarooof(ph)**.

A: Yes.

Q: And do you remember what year you moved there?

A: We didn't move there.

Q: Oh.

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A: My mother took the necessary instruments in a small case, and she came to **Landvarooft**(ph), and she bought from a hairdresser a better chair for patients, and she worked all the day there, and in the evening she was coming back to **Vilnius**.

Q: To **Vilnius**, but not to **Nesvizh**.

A: No, no.

Q: I see. So –

A: That was already in **Vilnius**.

Q: So – okay. So the year you move to **Vilnius** would have been 1929 - 1930, do you remember?

A: Probably 1930.

Q: So, did you see your father more often once you and your mother moved to –

A: No, because he moved to **Warsaw**.

Q: I see.

A: He tried not to meet, th-the old –

Q: Family.

A: – family.

Q: Did he have a new family?

A: Yes. He had a new family, and the people that he called so dar –

Q: Such a name.

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A: – so hard, were the people who were around him, were living from American money, that were receiving from **New Jersey**. What is the capital of **New Jersey**?

Q: Trent – probably **Trenton**, yeah. **Trenton, Trenton.**

A: **Trenton.**

Q: I believe it – **Trenton**, yeah.

A: In **Trenton** he has a small factory of paper, and he was sending them dollars. When they began acquaintance with receiving from him dollars, most of them didn't work.

Q: This is a very well known syndrome.

A: Yes.

Q: This is a very well known syndrome. Hang on just a second. So, let's go back a little bit to **Nesvizh** –

A: Yes.

Q: – because I want – you say your happiest development – you know, your happiest memories are from growing up there. Is that so – is that so?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about what some of those memories are.

A: I have a collection of photographs of **Nesvizh**.

Q: Mm-hm.

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A: I brought it if now from **Lithuania**, from a sanitarium, where there were some people from **White Russia**, and when I told them that I know **Nesvizh** they were very excited and they send me photographs of **Nesvizh**, how **Nesvizh** looks now. And they called **Nesvizh** the pearl of **White Russia**.

Q: And why is it so? Why – why is **Nesvizh** so special?

A: I think that mostly thanks to the family of the **Radziwells**, because they heard in **Nesvizh** there might be a big palace. I don't know if there is a second such in the former **Poland**. And around the palace was a beautiful park. And the Catholic priests brought Italian artists, who painted the churches in **Nesvizh**. So, it was a small town, but some very excellent in architecture, in culture, and in Jewish life, too.

Q: In what way – what was special in Jewish life in **Nesvizh**?

A: In Jewish life, the most of the people were intelligentsia.

Q: Ah, ah.

A: Mostly. And when they needed a university, they send their young people to **Vilnius** to the University of **Jan Batory**.

Q: **Stefan Batory**.

A: **Stefan Batory**.

Q: **Batory**, mm-hm.

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A: **Stefan Batory** was a Hungarian, or to **Lemberg** to **Lwów**.

Q: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

A: In **Lwow** was the University of **Jan Kazimierz**, one of the Polish kings.

Q: Do you have a particular memory from **Nesvizh** about your own life that is special?

A: About my own life is much of excitement. The school was excellent, the Polish gymnasium.

Q: Is that where you attended?

A: Yes.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: After **Farwood**(ph), after the Hebrew – Hebrew school. The school was on the name of **Wladislaw Syrokomla**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: **Wladislaw Syrokomla** was a Polish White Russian writer and philosopher. So the White Russians say, our great man, and the Polish said, our great man.

Q: Very familiar, very familiar, yes.

A: Yes. The director of the school was **Jan Grodis**(ph), that's why I mix **Jan** –

Q: Before –

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A: **Jan Grodis**(ph). The last name looks maybe that he was Lithuanian, **Grodis**(ph), maybe.

Q: Possible.

A: And he was super tolerant to other nationalities. Super tolerant. He was a priest, and the priests mostly had some feelings not the best against not Catholics. But he was a different Catholic, and the big priest doctor professor **Jan Grodis**(ph).

Q: And he was – was it a public school, the – this gymnasium?

A: This was a public school.

Q: And so a Catholic priest was the director of a public school?

A: Yes.

Q: How interesting.

A: And when the Russians came to **Nesvizh**, they didn't remove him for – from this work, a work of education –

Q: The Soviets, you mean.

A: You have to remember.

Q: This is very unusual.

A: So, I saw young **Grodis**(ph) already not in his priest's clothes –

Q: Yeah.

A: – but in the clothes of a Polish gentleman.

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Q: And when did the Soviets come to **Nesvizh**?

A: Hm?

Q: When did the Soviets come to **Nesvizh**?

A: When I came to –

Q: No, when did the Russians, when did the Soviets come to **Nesvizh**?

A: I wrote an article about that.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I have this article with me.

Q: Okay.

A: On four, five pages.

Q: Okay.

A: So, there is something about that. They came the first days of September '39.

Q: But you were already in **Vilnius**, yes?

A: I was on vacation in a small town, **Iwje**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: In **White Russia** – in today's **White Russia**. Why we went to **Iwje**? Why we went to **Landvarooof**(ph)? So we found I was the geographer, so I found city **Iwje**, not far from **Baranavichy**.

Q: Mm-hm.

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A: **Baranavichy** is a big railroad city. And the reds are – came to **Iwje**. And they came to **Iwje**, you are born in **Nikopol'**, so you are a Russian citizen, and finished, and no more discussions.

Q: So they took you aw – right – and you were how old? You were then 20 years old, 21 years old?

A: Yes.

Q: So that's perfect age for the army.

A: Yes.

Q: And so were you drafted into the Soviet army at that point.

A: They took 19 years old, thousand – thousand men 19 - 20, and 18. I was in the middle.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: So, I went to the army and I came to **Leningrad**.

Q: Before we talk about **Leningrad** –

A: Yes?

Q: Let's talk about **Vilnius**, where you also lived, in the 1930s.

A: Yes.

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Q: What can you tell us about your life in **Vilnius** then? What kind of a city was it for you? What did – did – did you have close friends, did your mo – was your mother happy there? Did you have –

A: My mother was only in one thing unhappy, that it was so many dentists in **Vilnius**, and she was already an old lady, at this time she was close to 60. It is very old.

Q: Yes.

A: Today 60 years, it is nothing special. So, this material side was –

Q: Difficult.

A: Yes. So, we went to different small cities and I was the geographer, very responsible for my job, so we went to **Landvaroof(ph)**, **Kujainietz(ph)**, **Iwje**, **Sobotniki** and what, may – maybe 15 different places, and usually the technique was such that my mother wrote to the pharmacist, and the pharmacist answered that there is no dentist, and a second, very important question, is there a forest?

Q: And why is that? Why would be a forest important?

A: The forest is important, who is living in a forest, especially in a pine forest, we'll have excellent lungs. And until now I have excellent lungs.

Q: How wonderful. How wonderful. There are beautiful pine forests in that part of the world.

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A: Yes.

Q: And so you were kind of like traveling dentists, you and she.

A: Yes.

Q: And yet you would come back to **Wilno** to live. So you would be all –

A: To **Wilno** to live.

Q: Yes.

A: But one vacation we [**indecipherable**] again, and she said, don't move anywhere. We will see what will be after.

Q: And where – you were then in that resort town? What was the place –

A: It was '39 in **Iwje**. And in **Iwje** came the Russians.

Q: And what happened with your mother when you went to the army?

A: She wrote letters to me, and she send me food, to the army.

Q: Of course.

A: And my friends in the army said they never saw such big animals with such good food. And everything stopped. The lit – the lit – Italians came to **Vilnius**, and they knew that **Vilnius** had a second name, **Jerusalem** of **Lithuania**. So they began to destroy absolutely the Jewish population in **Vilnius**. And one of my friends, **Jergus(ph) Kowalski(ph)** was immediately killed.

Q: One of your friends, **Jergus(ph) Kowalski(ph)** was immediately killed.

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A: **Jergus**(ph).

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It is **Grigory**.

Q: Yeah.

A: **Gregory. Jergus**(ph) **Kowalski**(ph). And **Kowalski**(ph) the name is a **Slavonic** name.

Q: Yes.

A: But he was a very true Jew, and he was together with me in gymnasium of **Slovatski**(ph) **Vilnius**. And he went to **Germanistic**(ph), so he knew German excellent, and she began to quarrel with the German soldier, and the soldier sli – killed **Kowalski**(ph). And I met **Kowalski's**(ph) brother already, after the war.

Q: And your mother, was she in **Vilnius**, or was she in this tow – small town when all –

A: She was, when I went to the – to the – to the army –

Q: Yeah.

A: – in **Iwje**.

Q: In **Iwje**.

A: She didn't come back to **Vilnius**.

Q: Okay.

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A: Because in **Iwje** she had enough patients, and –

Q: It was okay.

A: – it was easier than in **Vilnius**.

Q: What happened to her?

A: She was killed by the Germans. I received a letter from a Jewish doctor **Melamed**(ph) from **Iwje**, and he wrote, kill the Germans, kill the Germans. Your mother, together with other intelligentsia went to someplace – I don't remember what is the name of the place – and was executed.

Q: Where were you when you got this letter? Where were you when you got this letter?

A: In the army.

Q: I know, but what ci – what place? What place? Were you in **Leningrad**?

A: In **Leningrad** all the time.

Q: In aw – in **Leningrad** the whole time.

A: Yeah, all the time. All the time of the blockade.

Q: So were – this was – you got the letter before the blockade?

A: It was already the blockade, because when the Reds came to **Iwje**, they came to eastern **Poland**. And when they came to eastern **Poland**, the western part of **Soviet Russia** became –

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Q: That's right. The –

A: [indecipherable]

Q: – it got ex – yeah, it got extended.

A: Finished, miss **Poland**.

Q: Now, here's a question. You mentioned your father was the head of the Zionists in **Vilnius**.

A: Yes.

Q: As you were growing up, in your childhood, in your – in your teenage years, did you have any political interests at all? Were you interested in politics? Did you identify yourself to any particular group?

A: My beloved organization was **Hashomer Hatzair**. From **Hashomer Hatzair**, most of the **Shomerim** took part in every fight against **Hitler**. And how you see on many of the photographs, I am with the **Hashomer**. This is my political organization.

Q: Tell us – tell us a little bit more about these organizations, so that people who are listening to this in the future would understand what they were.

A: **Hashomer Hatzair** was beloved by my father because he was a Zionist, and this was the most developed youth organization for Zionists. So he loved **Hashomer Hatzair**. And he told my mother that it is a good place for your son to be a **Shomer**.

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First she said, ah, I don't know what kind of youth is there, that is different youth, good and bad and all that. But when he told her, she took it –

Q: Seriously.

A: Yes. And I was very close to **Hashomer Hatzair** because my father was the head of the Zionist organization.

Q: Did you have any other close relatives as you were growing up, with you? To me, I get the impression that it was only your mother and yourself, as a team.

You're the geographer, she's the dentist. Were there any other people who were close to you at those years?

A: I will tell you, there is, in my biography a lot of details. But I will repeat the most important. My mother's sister, **Mina(ph)** was a massage-ist in the **Druskininkai**. That's why almost every year I am coming to the **Druskininkai** for two weeks, and I see some of the forest there, and for me is a great, tragic pleasure to see it. So, I went to the cemetery of people who were killed in **Druskininkai**.

Most of the people were Russians, and there was written their military –

Q: Rank.

A: Yes. And they saw that some other man is going on the same cemetery and is – he reads the inscriptions on the monuments. Well, I began to speak with him and he

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said that yes, I am from **Druskininkai**. I was a partisan against **Hitler**. All the Jews from **Druskininkai** were taken to **Grodno** and executed.

Q: That would mean your aunt as well.

A: And among them was my mother's sister, the massage-ist, **Mina(ph)**. In **Nesvizh** my mother had a brother, **Zahar(ph)**. **Zahar(ph)** was killed in **Nesvizh** very fast, because the Germans had the impression that his son has sympathies for leftist. So he was executed almost immediately, maybe the second or third day in **Nesvizh**. He was a composer, and I have probably here some notes that he composed. And some of his songs, I know from my memory, and I would want to – to – to make some – some use of that.

Q: Could you sing something? Would you mind singing one of those songs? Do you mind singing one of them right now?

A: Yes.

Q: Please?

A: Not the easiest songs.

Q: Okay.

A: The texts are Polish.

Q: It's okay.

A: It's understandable.

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Q: Yes.

A: Now, I am a very small singer.

Q: It's okay, it's okay. For us it's very important.

A: **Atango**(ph).

Q: **Atango**(ph).

A: **Atango**(ph). [**sings**]

Q: Thank you, thank you, I know it's not easy. But we care very much about the music that people created. And when – this is the music of the boy who was killed, then, almost immediately.

A: It was the [**indecipherable**] killed. His name is **Salomone**(ph) **Zarhe**(ph).

Q: **Salomone**(ph) **Zarhe**(ph).

A: Yes, **Salomone**(ph) **Zarhe**(ph). **Salomone**(ph), we called him **Moniek**(ph).

Q: **Moniek**(ph).

A: **Moniek**(ph) **Zarhe**(ph). Everybody knew him, because in **Nesvizh** he was the director of a dancing and singing ensemble.

Q: When did you – when you found – do you remember when you found out about these different things? Was it when you were in **Leningrad**, or after the war? What happened to your Aunt **Mina**(ph), what happened to **Moniek**(ph), what happened to

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your mother. I mean, your mother is, you got the letter, but the other people who were close to you and dear to you, when did you find out about their fate?

A: Something I found from letters, like Dr. **Melamud's**(ph) son from **[indecipherable]**. Somebody I found in **Druskininkai** already lately –

Q: Mm-hm, recently.

A: Yes, that they saw that all the Jews were executed in **Grodno**. From many people, I know who survived **Nesvizh**. For instance, I write to **Israel**, to a very old friend. The old friend fought with me under **Leningrad**, against **Hitler**, but I didn't know about it, because under **Leningrad** you had a half million soldiers, wh-wh-who knows? And this was the photograph of the **Radziwells**. His father was photographing everything what happens in the palace of the **Radziwells**.

Q: I see.

A: And the **Radziwells** was not simple **youks**, but they had people in the royal family of **Poland**.

Q: Yes.

A: So it was a very special family. For instance, around **Nesvizh** they had over a million hectares of ground, except the palace, with the park, with everything. Now, from **Nesvizh** – so, I receive letters until now from the friend from **Israel**. He was very hard –

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Q: Wounded, or something?

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Wounded, was he wounded, did he have injuries?

A: He – he – he couldn't walk, al-al-al-almost – almost he couldn't. His wife died a short time ago, she was a survivor from **Romania**. So, from him I know a lot. A lot I know from the book, from Dr. **Shalom Cholawsky**. Dr. **Shalom Cholawsky** wrote about Jewish partisans who fought against **Hitler**. And he was one of the heads of the Jewish partisans. And he's – here is his photograph with his rifle. Dr. **Shalom Cholawsky**. So, from such –

Q: Sources.

A: – sources, I know something.

Q: So, let's go back now to **Leningrad**.

A: Yes.

Q: And tell us – tell me about what was your experience there. What was it like to be in the siege of **Leningrad**? What kind of fighting happened?

A: You have to take [indecipherable] something, that's my mother finished a Russian high school, and a Russian university in **Kharkov**, in **Ukraine**. And Russian, she said to everybody that **Russia** is my homeland. So I had some sentiments to Russian culture, to **Tolstoy**, to – to **Chekhov**.

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Q: Of course.

A: It is under-understandable. So, when I came to the Russian army, I found people who speak almost so well, how I am speaking Russian. And born in **Nikopol'**, so it is **Russia**. So, to en – together I am theirs, you know. So I have very strong sentiments to Russian culture, to the Russian people, but not to the Russian **[indecipherable]**.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Because politics are very different, with a lot of facts, subjective facts. The Polish look different today, different they looked 15 years ago, so I try to be very neutral, and my politics is the politics of **America**.

Q: But in **Leningrad** in 1941, that's the story I want to capture. Of a young man who's 20 years old, or 19 years old, who's in the Soviet army, and li – and you know, it's hard time. I want to learn about what that was like.

A: Yes. In the gymnasium of **Slovatski(ph)** in **Vilnius** was a **legya(ph)**, **legya(ph)**, a legion of young people who had a military training. But not all the Jews were there. Some, if they were **[indecipherable]** but if they were young **[indecipherable]**. When they came to the Red Army, it was a training shooting. And I shot three times and I make 29 points.

Q: Is that good or bad? I have no idea.

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A: It is a very high result.

Q: So that means you're a good marksman.

A: Yes. A man who speaks Russian, and who shoots 29 from 30 possible theoretically –

Q: Points.

A: Oh, okay. It was another training, who will put his gasmask faster than any other. So many made it in five seconds, in seven seconds. I made in one second and four. Ay. So they gave me on a good artillery position, thanks which I don't hear you too well.

Q: If you had gotten 20, and not 30 - 29, maybe you'd hear me better, is that what you're saying?

A: Probably, probably. Or not –

Q: Or not.

A: – or not.

Q: You never, never know.

A: I don't know.

Q: So, you were in the artillery, so that means front line, yes?

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A: So, it was artillery against German bombers. And sometimes we shoot well, and sometimes we shoot very badly. The first day, we shoot in – in – in a Russian plane by mistake.

Q: It happens.

A: It is different, you know. And when the Russians, at whom we shoot, found themselves a piece of a forest and were hiding, so we gave a commander to – to – to shot better. And they came to the **[indecipherable]** to our battery, and they said, no more planes.

Q: Good that they survived. At least that much.

A: So, was th-the – the begin of our great training. But, because we shot bombers, the head of our unit said, we anti-aviation artillery-ists, we are living a long time, so he said. Because, you know, they bombard a factory, and they don't look on the battery of artilleries, they don't need a battery of artilleries, they need a – to destroy the factory, or to destroy the civilian population in this city, on the market or something. So, the – the head of the unit told the truth. I think that he is still alive.

Q: Did you eat well during the siege?

A: This was the most terrible thing. At home I **weighted** 66 kilograms. In the army, I **weighted** 39 - 37. I looked more like a dead man. The hunger was terrible. It is terrible. It is weeks and weeks and months and months, almost nothing eating. I

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have an excellent book, he has the book, where the author wrote the true face of the blockade of [**indecipherable**]. It is the one book where there is no subjective to – to much moments. He wrote how it was, everything. It is – it is terrible. You are walking through the streets and you are seeing dozens of dying people. This author said that in the hunger in **Leningrad** died one million population. One million; not military, civil population. And he said that the history doesn't know a second such case that 900 days you don't give up, and **Hitler** can't take **Leningrad**. The marshals of **Hitler** came close the gates of the city, and they brought even stones to build a monument for **Hitler**, for their fuehrer. And we did, 20 years old guys, we said no. No. Ended. No was true.

Q: No stones for – yes. So what was it that you did eat? What was it that you did eat?

Q: This author wrote exactly, I will tell you for an example. 15 grams sugar, it is not a full teaspoon. Around 20 pounds fat, but who knows what kind of fat it is? From a dog, or from a – from a cow? Who – who – who knows what it is? No bread, but instead of bread, **sukardi**(ph). It's made – it means pieces of bread baked on – on – on fire, you know. So people said that the material for the – for the bread is the rest from food for horses, for cavalry. But the horses died from hunger a long time ago, and they make – made bread for the population. What is there more?

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Q: I'm tal – but you, is there something you remember eating? This is the same thing –

A: This is – this was my – my eating, but it came a better time, as they send my unit to the lake of **Ladoga**.

Q: Where is that?

A: **Ladoga** is the largest lake in **Europe**. It is between Finland and between Russia. The Finnish said that all **Ladoga** has to belong to them, and the Russians say that all **Ladoga** has to belong to the Russians. On the **Ladoga** were points where trucks winter were going through the snow and the ice, through the **Ladoga**, through the – with some food. And we didn't have a lot work to fight to the Germans, so we had enough time to help the civil population. So, we could –

Q: Get some food.

A: – something what fell on the – on the ground, or something to – but to take something from a truck, dead. Everybody knew, don't touch it. The **Ladoga** has 42 kilometers, such trees were from a – one side were the Finns, and on the other side the Russians.

Q: And were you shooting at each other at that time, the Finns and the Russians, or not?

A: What?

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Q: At that time, when you were in **Ladoga**, were the Finns shooting at the Russians or not, and the Russians shooting at the Finns?

A: I would say that the Finns wanted to look more gentlemen than the Germans. I feel so, that they threw less shells on the Russian territora – territory than the Germans. I have a such feeling, because in **Leningrad** was inscriptions on the walls, where is safer to – to walk. So, if you look what is written, it is written so, like most of the shells would come from the **dort** – from the Finns. Less from the Finns and more from the south.

Q: From the Germans.

A: From the Germans. I have a such impression. And the author of the book writes that the dictator of **Finland** was a administered by the tsar in **Russia**. So, he even told – maybe it is a fantasy, but he told the Finnish army that he was the dictator, but don't touch [**indecipherable**].

Q: Ah.

A: So, it was some easier situation.

Q: How long were you there, at Lake **Ladoga**?

A: A winter of minus 40 Celsius, minus 47.

Q: Oh yay, oh yay.

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A: That's why I pray from – for **Roosevelt**. He gave us warm shoes. It was more important than anything else. **Churchill** didn't do it, but **Roosevelt**. So, with the good shoes, we ate a little more, and someday I was taken, together with 15 – 16 other Polish Jews, and sent back to the city to – sent to the city of **Leningrad** back. I came back, it was after a winter of **Ladoga**, I came back to a reserve unit, and the reserve unit, some people who didn't like too much **amho** – too much Jewish people. Ah, they are all Polish, send them to **Poland** back. We're organizing a Polish army, a leftist army. So, in the reserve unit I was taken to, after a winter of **Ladoga**, and I came to the Polish army, and in the Polish army I fought in many places.

Q: Such as?

A: In such places like – I didn't sleep too much. **Schneidemühl**.

Q: Was that already east **Russia**?

A: **Schneidemühl**, it is in western **Pomerania**. It is the western part of today's **Poland**.

Q: Yes.

A: On the **Baltic** Sea. So, the Germans, when we was closer to **Berlin**, being stronger and stronger, and they took already all the people to the army an-and – and too young, and too old, and too – everybody understood that the end will come.

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Now, and with the Polish army, I took part in the fight for **Warsaw**, until '45, May two, I fought in **Berlin**.

Q: Wow.

A: Yes.

Q: What are your memories from there?

A: Mm?

Q: What can you tell us about your experience there?

A: The Germans had a very strong discipline in the army. Very strong discipline.

And the **Hitler** youth organization elevated them, the young people was tigers.

Young girls 14 years old, were standing in the windows and shooting into the Soviet tanks. But **Zhukov** had this time more force, more planes, more artillery. I

was an inspector over in the – in the army, so I was sent to different units, and among the units were such shells and artillery, that when you s – closing to the – to the gun, it was a hundred thun-thunders, not one thunder, a hundred thunders.

That's why my hearing is a such one, but when I was still young, it was okay. When I became very old, is not okay.

Q: Tell me, the Soviet army – you were in the Polish army, not the Soviet army. But the Soviet army did not have the best reputation as it went westwards, dif – firing on the retreating Germans. And the bad reputation was generally borne by the

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female civilian population. The Soviet army had a reputation of raping its way westwards to **Berlin**. Do you know, did you see any of that?

A: I saw many such cases. In comparison with what **Hitler** did in one **White Russia**, can you forget about everything else? Because they didn't leave **White Russia** at all. No one house was in – in a normal shape. Nothing was. It – it was **Sahara**. So, to – to compare if a young Russian tried something, yes, it is very bad, sure, sure. And **Zhukov** gave very hard penalties for such things, very hard penalties. The head of our unit and Soviet chemical specialist had something to do in **Warsaw**. In **Poland** the – they behaved a lot better than in other places. So he got three months in a – i-i-in a special –

Q: Prison?

A: In a special unit.

Q: Oh.

A: Where the unit was all the times sent on the front, you know. And he came – came alive. It i – it is – it is a – a very big problem, but every war brings true crimes. Every war.

Q: Did you, as you were – before you went into the Polish army, or as you were going westwards, did you go through **Belarus**, did you see **Nesvizh**? Did you see anything of your former life while you were still in the army?

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A: When I was in the army, I didn't see exactly the places where I was before, because w-we went around **Warsaw** and from **Warsaw** in **Pomerania**, close to the **Baltic** Sea, I was never there before. So, I can tell only like about this author of the book, and about Russian people, who told me what there was. In – in **White Russia**, if a Jewish partisan was caught, they killed all the village, burned all the village, and their pro-pro-pro-pro-pro acquaintance were killed. It is impossible to d – to describe. One word, and you perished, you know. And I saw in **White Russia** [indecipherable] I didn't leave any, but [indecipherable] didn't exist. Didn't exist absolutely.

Q: Yeah, I know.

A: And, when after the discipline, the German discipline finished, oh, we like every [indecipherable] I wa – I was one moment the commander of the first Polish army, send me to find Greek prisoners. Where to look for them? Nobody knows. Okay, bu-bu-but –

Q: Where were you – where were you? Were you in **Warsaw** then, or in –

A: It finished the war, maybe a week after finishing the war.

Q: And you were in **Berlin**? The week after you finished the war, where were you located?

A: I forgot the name. A small town maybe 20 kilometers from **Berlin**.

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Q: Okay, you were in **Germany**.

A: So I want to – to turn back and to tell you about all the picture.

Q: Oh, let's – oh, but – but if you were in the – you – let's do it the Greek prisoners.

I was just trying to get a sense of where they were. You were se-sent to find Greek prisoners, around this small town in – near **Berlin**, yes?

A: Na – here is **Berlin**.

Q: Yeah, yes, I know. I don't have **Berlin**. So, did you find them?

A: Yes. The commander gave me an excellent new Austrian car with fashion. And, look for the Greeks. I look on this route, on this route, 20 kilometers farther, 60 kilometers farther, no Greeks. In one place I see a German lady, an old lady. I thought, maybe you know something about the Greek prisoners. I don't know, but I saw prisoners in strange –

Q: Uniforms.

A: – uniforms. Maybe they are the Greeks. Where are they? La – three kilometers from here. I took her to my car, and we brought to the place that she – around there were Greeks. So I begin to tell them that I am from a classic gymnasium and that I know ancient Greek. Ohh, excellent, excellent. And they began in Latin [**speaks Latin here**]. This is Latin. That – that is taken from Greek, okay. Or – or **Homer**. And I began in Greek, wh-who is your head here? The head, we will call him, but

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he doesn't like to – to – to – to, you know. Who is it? He says, General **Mitalas**. He was the former Greek Minister of Defense. How he came to the Germans? The Italians, who couldn't take **Greece**, took him. Was a prisoner. And when they, under the pressure of the Americans, they had to go out from – from **Italy**, they left **Mitalas** there. Okay. So I told in Greek to **Mitalas** a big part of “**The Iliad**” and I asked him, do you understand what I said? He said, no. How is it possible? A former minister doesn't know Greek? **Homer**? He said, now is a big difference in the Greek pronunciation and Greek spelling, and I don't know it, he said. Ancient Greek, who knows – knows? Only a great aristocrat. So I am the great aristocrat. And I took him with my excellent car. Ah-hah, first the car came to **Berlin**, to the gates of the city. **Berlin** looked very well, not destroyed anything, well, what is it? But when I went inside the city, closer to the center, was more and more and more, and close to the **Reichstag** –

Q: Nothing.

A: Yeah. Okay. So, one of the soldiers, of the Soviet soldiers, “Stop!” Why? Nobody can enter here. Okay, but look whom I have here in car. He looked in car and stood immediately like he would see God, because the Greeks had on their uniforms, the same things like the Russians, with the gold, and all that. And he

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allowed us to enter the city. So I enter to the city, and I went to the **Reichstag**. Went to the **Reichstag** and I saw **Goebbels** lying on the – on the –

Q: No kidding?

A: – sidewalk.

Q: How did you know it was **Goebbels**?

A: Because he was burned, and people told already that he was thrown away.

Q: I thought **Goebbels** was burned together with his wife and seven children?

A: Yes, he killed six children, he killed his wife, and he killed himself.

Q: But only he – you only saw his corpse, you didn't see the – the rest? You didn't see the wife and children?

A: No, I saw only him. Probably the children and the wife were somewhere else.

The Greek former minister said, what kind of language do you know? I told, I know several languages. French do you know? Yes, I know. And from this moment on, we spoke with **Mitalas** –

Q: In French.

A: – French. And I brought **Mitalas** to the forest, where he was with 900 other Greeks. And he said about me, I don't know why [**indecipherable**]. And he was very glad that I showed him **Berlin**. And **Berlin** was, the center city was destroyed,

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because the Metro in **Berlin**, **Hitler** burned. And in the Metro were thousands and thousands of Germans who died there, because he thought that the Red Army –

Q: Will come.

A: – will go through the Metro too.

Q: So these – you found **Mitalas** and you found a few Greeks around him, but not the 900. These were soldiers, these were – who were the other Greeks who were with the –

A: From a colonel up.

Q: So these were high officers.

A: High officers, and a Soviet delegation came to my Polish unit and took them away to **Odessa**. And all the Greeks, how the author of the book, and how it is true, came to **Odessa** do – to Greek back.

Q: I see, I see. What a – I mean, but what an adventure.

A: Yeah.

Q: What an adventure. So how long did you stay in **Berlin**?

A: In **Berlin**, maybe two months.

Q: And what happened to you after that?

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A: After **Berlin**, the first Polish army became the fourth **Silesian** army, and we went to **Katowice**. And we came to the biggest city in **Silesia**, where there is coal, where th –

Q: Right.

A: Yes. And the army number four begin to stay in **Katowice**.

Q: Were you still an inspector at that time, or were you – have some of the

A: No, tha-that was – n-n-no inspector, because it was not a job. Something from the generals who knew me send him.

Q: What was your rank in the army, in the Polish army, what was your rank?

A: I was one step from a colonel.

Q: How do say that in **Polish**?

A: **Podpulkownik**.

Q: **Podpulkownik**. Lieutenant Colonel, in other words. Does that mean lieutenant colonel in a –

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: The lieutenant colonel.

A: But I was already a full colonel. I was a full colonel, but my father was a Zionist, and they took back. Zionist.

Q: [**indecipherable**]

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A: And some friend explained that, what do you want, in **Poland** is a different situation, and the [**indecipherable**] yes, some of them have sympathies to **Marx** or – or something, but not typical for them, you know.

Q: It's true.

A: No. Zionist, it was like toothache to – to tell something that you have a – you're a **criminalist**. Zionist. And they took it back. And the guy died probably, a long time ago. He had a – a charming wife, a wife of a Polish general, but a Russian Polish general. In tsarist time, when the Russians back east – back, they took factories and workers together. And among the workers was her father. Charming wife, but he, Zionist, he pronounced it so, that – that I would – I don't know.

Q: And what was his job, what was his rank? I mean, what was hi – what power did he have that he could take this away? Was he intelligence, was he **KGB**, was he what?

A: No, he had –

Q: Political officer?

A: – a big influence in **Poland**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Was an advisor in the government or something. I-I – I-I don't know exactly.

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Q: But he must have been a political – I mean, he must have looked for political purity, because –

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. To tell that **Stalin** was not so smart? [laughter]

Q: He would say such things? He said such things? That **Stalin** –

A: No-o-o-o.

Q: No.

A: He was – pronounced differently the word Zionist.

Q: Yes.

A: That he would say it – a murder.

Q: So [indecipherable] what was li – what happened after?

A: After being in **Katowice**, I was not demobilized, but some of people were already demobilized. But th-the blockade of **Leningrad** and everything, some authority, you know, said to me, find seven girls who can write on the type – ty-typewriter. Okay. I found seven girls, and out of the seven girls is my wife.

Q: And that was in **Katowice**? That was in **Katowice**?

A: In **Katowice**.

Q: Did you ever go back to **Nesvizh** after the war?

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A: No, my friend, but I have with **Nesvizh** very strong contacts. Dr. **Cholawksy**, and one of the main workers in the – the Hebrew organization. An organization who has to do with the Holocaust –

Q: Yeah.

A: – is there, from **Nesvizh**. And another **schlar(ph)** was in gymnasium in **Nesvizh** together with me.

Q: Did you – I guess my larger question is, did you go back to any of the places, whether it was **Wilno**, whether it was **Nesvizh**, whether it was the various towns you had been with your mother, after the war, to see what they looked like?

A: In general, not. But I was close to **Ponary**, and **Ponary** is a station close to **Landwarów**.

Q: **Lentvaris**.

A: **Ponary** is from **Vilnius** nine kilometers, and **Landwarów**, 18. How they say in rail line. So, in **Ponary**, the most – you can't imagine what talents were destroyed. Poets and writers, and – and – and – and – it i – it is impossible to – to – to – to – to imagine. It is the – the grain of the Jewish family, you know.

Q: And you saw it right after the war?

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A: Yes, yes, yes. And when I go to **Druskininkai, Vilnius** was the –
[indecipherable] in **Vilnius** were destroyed by General **Chernikowski(ph)**.
Chernikowski's(ph) a Jewish guy.

Q: Oh.

A: Yeah. But this is not the – the – the clue, you know. So, I came to **Vilnius** six,
seven years ago, **Chernikowski's(ph)** monument, hoo, and another monument is
there. I go **[indecipherable]** but what is – what kind of ornament is it? On the street
Mickiewicz is – on the wall of the court before the war in – in **Vilnius**, the Polish
court, are names of young people who were killed. By whom they were killed, what
is it? And the Jewish guy explained me, that the Lithuanians said that the Jews were
criminals. That they killed the Lithuanians because the Lithuanians were Soviet
spies. But I imagine that when the Polish Jewish Jews in **Vilnius** came back to their
houses, and they knew from the population, from – from many other sources, who
was the real spies for **Hitler**, they came to the Soviets, and the Soviets do what with
the young, what they could do with somebody else. Or they could do with – with
Russians, who were under such suspicion, you know. So, in **Vilnius** in
[indecipherable] city on the street **Mickiewicz** is a such monument. So, you
know, how controversial all – all that is, you know. How –

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Q: When did you find out – you see, when you were talking to me before about how **Belarus** was no more, that it was a **Sahara**, that could be – that – that shows German brutality, Nazi brutality, collaborator brutality in wartime. When did you learn that there was something particular? When did you learn of the Holocaust? When did you first see the results that this was against the Jews, that this was a genocide?

A: Okay, I am very glad that you are asking about that. I'm very glad. The Holocaust was in several acts. Sometimes very late, and sometimes immediate. The immediate are **Ponary**, the **Jerusalem of Lithuania**. The immediate was **Nesvizh**, because in **Nesvizh** was a very hard Jewish community. An intelligent Jewish community in **Nesvizh**. And in **Nesvizh** they collected all the population on the market, maybe two weeks after **[indecipherable] Nesvizh**, and they killed everybody. There is maybe – maybe 10 people were –

Q: Survived.

A: Survived. And the White Russian peasantry was a lot more sympathetic to Jews than Polish. So, is it – so they destroyed almost all the **Nesvizh** community. And in one entry of a – of a very poor house in **Nesvizh**, stood a lady and took a girl from the –

Q: Line?

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A: – from the thousands who were pushed like animals to **[indecipherable]** you know. And the girl was saved by the lady who took her. And she was married by my friend who is **Yad Vashem**, who is working there. And thanks her, he is still alive. He is over 90.

Q: Oh my, oh my.

A: Yes.

Q: But my question is again, a personal question. When did you personally, where were you when you realized that this was a genocide against the Jews? When did you find out, when did you realize this was not just war, and horrible war, but this was also a genocide?

A: First I have small signals. In the Soviet press, in the military Soviet press, a little about. And I slept with a Jewish guy, **Schlitzer**(ph) was his name. And **Schlitzer** shed – said, do you know that the Germans are killing all the Jews? I was very careful. All the Jews? Yes, all the Jews. Yes, I believe. I believe that they could it do, because I am from a classical gymnasium, and I know that the Latin poets said, horror **Germanicus**(ph). That the main feelings in **Germany** is horror **Germanicus**(ph). The Belgians are very nice people, but the Germans are a horror. Two thousand years write a Latin words that the main characteristic of Germans is horror.

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Q: Why were you careful around him, or why were you careful when he said that?

A: I told you yes, it is possible. It is possible. And it was finished, the dispute. If he was a **schmekel**, so he told somebody else about speaking with me. He was not a **schmekel**, so I told him the truth. It was the first **klagator**(ph).

Q: Yeah, the first notes.

A: But when I heard more and more about that, and people are – are writing full pages and all that? Hey. So it is absolutely true. And when I ber – began to get news from Dr. **Cholawsky**, and news from the guy whose wife saves him, his life, and all that. So naturally it is absolutely true, and the news were brighter and brighter and brighter. And I came to **Druskininkai**, and from **Nesvizh** people told me that 6,000 Jews in **Nesvizh** were killed. It means hundred percent.

Q: Again, you learned that recently, you say, and I'm interested in after the war.

Did you, in **Katowice**, when you met your future wife, did you already have an idea that this – that this was complete, that this was a full genocide?

A: In time of war?

Q: Right after the war, yeah.

A: Or – immediately after the war?

Q: Yeah.

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A: Immediately after the war, I was in the [indecipherable] lagers. Oh, I so close to **Berlin**, in **Sachsenhausen**. **Sachsenhausen** was a big – I came to the **Sachsenhausen**. It stinks everything, well, what is it? There are two – two – no – **pietra**.

Q2: Two floors, two stories.

A: Yes, and one man is sitting and holding his leg so. I told him, **Et tu Francais?** No. **Zin sie deutsche? Nein**. All right. [speaks foreign language here]

Q: Tell me what in – translate.

A: What are you doing here? I – I am asking him. He said, they made a conference of all the Polish intelligentsia. And all the professors of **Jagiellonian** University was on the conference, and immediately after the conference, they were to **Sachsenhausen**. And he is sitting there because he was –

Q: At the conference.

A: O-O-O-On the – on the conference.

Q: That's the scene, I don't know if you seen the movie, "**Katyn**." You should see this movie. It's done by **Andrzej Wajda**. It's about **Katyn**, but there is also a scene in the film of professors from **Jagiellonian** University going to this conference and then being arrested and taken to **Sachsenhausen**. So I – when I saw it, I did not know whether this was based on a factual story, or part of, let's say, a narrative that

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you introduced into a film. And your grandfather just confirmed, you know, that it was based on a fact.

A: And after – a little after the war, when I received the letters from **Melanid**(ph) son, from the Dr. **[indecipherable]**, I knew already a lot. I know already a lot. Oh, my – my mother's brother was shot. His wife **Julia** was shot, their daughter was shot. **Moniek** the composer was shot. So, this is the most terrible memories, when has come the moment and I see my mother was executed, for what? You know?

Well, a patient was coming to her, and the patient was a poor man. I

[indecipherable] pay tomorrow. And she didn't have any – any money. But **Minsk** was the only big White Russian city that I saw destroyed like **Warsaw**. When we came the 17th September '44, to – to – to **Warsaw**, people who lived in **Warsaw** couldn't find their street, their street. They didn't find not only the houses, but they didn't find the pavement. And in **Wilno**, in **Wilno** on the street **Rudziczka**, I don't know how it is, but like **[indecipherable]**. You don't know **[indecipherable]**, it – it's in Polish.

Q: **[indecipherable]**

A: It is **Rudziczka**, and here is **Zawylna**(ph).

Q: Mm-hm. I know the street **[indecipherable]**

A: From right side of the **Rudziczka** is the house where it was born my mother.

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Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: I know the house.

A: I wasn't inside the house, but the house looks very well. I don't know – or, they have there some institution or something, I don't know, because the – the gate is – is closed. If you come with a car you have to – I – I don't know. But with – with a – a trees around, before the war it looked a lot worse.

Q: Let's go back to **Katowice**.

A: Yes.

Q: How did you go – get from **Katowice** to the University of **Pennsylvania**?

A: Uh-huh. I went to my head in the army. I was on the third year, I told him, in the University of **Stefan Batory**. I want to finish my studies. This is a hard thing, a hard thing, but I will ask very high in military. Maybe he himself didn't ask, maybe some of his friend asked the **Ragsowski(ph)**, because a – a veteran with a **[indecipherable]** all that, is not so easy. And they allowed me to study further my philosophy.

Q: Is that what you were studying at **Stefan Batory**, is philosophy?

A: Yes. Not only philosophy.

Q: Okay.

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A: First I studied philosophy, and after I studied **Polandistic**, and – and **[indecipherable]** it is a – yes. So, okay, but where to find documents from before the war? Hey, in a big, beautiful city **Torun**.

Q: Probably here.

A: Yeah, yeah. You know. You are the geographer, better than I am. There are professors from **Vilnius** University. Because where the Lithuanians made what you showed, they came to **Torun**, and they called their institute **Kopernika [indecipherable]**. Well, I will find my professor of philosophy, **Czezowski, Tadeusz Czezowski**. He saved hundreds of Jews, **Czezowski**. He was a very rich man, and he made from the Jews **[indecipherable]**, people who don't have any ground and ni-ni-na, and that are dying from hunger, and these were hundreds of Jews, **Czezows – [indecipherable]**. I came to **Torun**, I see around **Vilnius** professors. Professor of psychology, he remembered that I have a five. Okay. **Eisenberg** is his name, but not a Jew. Th-The name is not – I would want to see professor **Tadeusz Czezowski**. Come here, come here. I came to Professor **Czezowski**, and he has a tic. So I was still in uniform. I told him about **Wilno** University, what exams are ahead, with the names of the professors and everything. He listened and he said, I don't have any suspicion that there is something untrue. But wait a little. I am waiting, and he brought all the papers with my inscriptions

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when I came, when I did come, didn't come. And **Kowalski(ph)**, the – the killed **Jergus(ph) Kowalski(ph)** was there in the – the many, many – everything. A-All my studies are there. And he said that I didn't come to my **[indecipherable]**.

Q: After the war, after everything, after the ba – you know, all the fighting, and he realizes that twice you were absent.

A: Yes.

Q: This is important.

A: And such **[indecipherable]**. Okay, and he said, when the two seminars I missed, he said, **bilig zhesky(ph), bilig zhesky(ph)**. There were small faults. There were small faults. **Bilig zhesky(ph)**.

Q: But he let you continue your studies.

A: And he wrote as such document to the **ministerium(ph)** of the – of education that I was the – everything and when **Czewowski** writes this, and I started in the **Warsaw** University, and I studied with very interesting people in the **Warsaw** University. You know the – the – the realizer of – of the films, a lady.

Q: **Agnieszka Holland?**

A: **Agnieszka Holland**. I knew –

Q: Marvelous films.

A: Yes.

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Q: Marvelous.

A: I knew all her – her father, excellent. He was studying together with me.

Q: I think her films are inspired. I think they're magnificent, the films that she makes.

A: Yeah.

Q: How interesting. And so did you finish a degree in philosophy at **Warsaw** University?

A: Philosophy.

Q: Okay.

A: But in – in the documents probably they write **filozoficzną społeczny**.

Q: In **Poland – Polandnistic**.

A: Philis – philosophical social.

Q: Ah.

A: It was one word. Maybe yes, maybe not. I – I – I don't remember.

Q: Okay. So how do we get from **Poland** to the **United States**?

A: People from the west don't know the grain of the – of the situation of some nationalities in – in the world, and the situation of Jews and the Catholics and all that. They d – they don't know it. You have to be inside to **[indecipherable]**.

Excuse me, please repeat the – your question.

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Q: How did you get from **Poland** to the **United States**?

A: It came a time – but I don't want – want to tell something bad about **Poland**. I don't want, because in **Poland** especially, the intelligentsia were God's people. God's people. But among the gods, **Boleslaw Prus**, a big Polish writer was a great anti-Semite. But **Stefan Jaronski** was a great friend of the Jewish population. A great friend, you know. So it come a moment when people like **Prus**, like others, began to write and to speak too much Jews in **Poland**. Why do you have them? They are coming mass. Masses and masses from Soviet **Russia**. From [indecipherable] east **Asia**. It is true. We have to take. [speaks foreign language here] we know what it is. It became a slavery. A slavery. High military people who fought for **Poland**, you know, were removed from their apartments. I go on the street, I meet **Panya Rabinowicz**, my friend's wife, and she said, you see what you did here? You see what you – you see? We have to go out from **Poland**. And so every day, more and more and more. And it was said that this time they are living, especially Jews, with more education, with – and I said to my wife, we are going out.

Q: When was this?

A: '63. Probably, probably.

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Q: Between the time you finished university in **Warsaw** in 1963, what was your tr –
profession?

A: In '63?

Q: Between – right after the war time –

A: I had a lot of professors, a lot of professors. I tried – I – I edited the Soviet
history from Russian into Polish. And the boo – and the book was used in Polish
schools. I was the redactor –

Q: The editor.

A: – of philosoph – philosophical works. Some of them I have among my –

Q: Your things, yeah, yeah.

A: At home, yes. I translated on conferences from Russian into Polish and from
Polish into Russian, immediately.

Q: You were interpreter.

A: Yes, interpreter, but an interpreter that must – **similtank**, as they called it.

Q: Yes, yes, simultaneous interpretation.

A: Yes. You have to –

Q: It's very hard.

A: – immediately after – and – and people are **[indecipherable]** if – if you said not
– yeah. So, we're going out, but where? In **Canada**, I have a – a girl whom I know

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from gymnasium still, and she wrote letters to me and – okay. The **United States** has an [indecipherable] of a democratic country. And **Roosevelt** was a super intelligent man. He was sick, he couldn't do everything what he would do. But you can imagine what is it to defend **Moscow** [indecipherable] in – in warm feet –

Q: Shoes.

A: – shoes, when he sent, in the terrible time of **Stalingrad**, the – **Hitler** has thousand bombers, and – and – and – and the Russian 43. And he send nickel, and raw materials, and a lot of ships were destroyed by the Germans. And we're going to [indecipherable] I know that **America** has for me an opinion of a truly democratic country. Okay, we will try. And I was happy that they – a moment that they will send and push with their leg, the – the Jewish from – from **Poland**. And especially who had military jobs and all – all – all that, or professors or something. And I went to a guy in **Warsaw**, connected with the police probably. And they had the anti-Semites, an opinion that every Jew has diamonds in – in his pockets. Nothing else. No diamonds. Do you have great paintings and all – I don't have anything. I – I am buying cement ice – cement eggs, you know. No, you. And they send me like thousands of Jews, thousands, mostly from this home saved the [indecipherable] from – from that. From [indecipherable]. And they sent me to **Vienna**, and in **Vienna** it was 10 days. And in **Vienna** as he said, you can go to

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Rome. In **Rome** are bureaucrats who help the Jews to make all the formalities better and – and faster, and – **Rome?** I am a classic. Why not? We went to **Rome** and we were there a half year, in **Rome.** And they asked, why **America?** I laughed, I told him, because of American [indecipherable] **Greta Garbo. Marlene Dietrich.** Without that we can't live. And they laughed. And where did you want to – to live in **America.** I know b – about the **United States** something, I have some education, okay. Hm, what do you want? I want a city where there is a university, or there are cultural organizations, because I am a humanitarian. I will find something. With English is with me bad. But I – I wa – I will – I will do it. **Philadelphia** would be good? Yes. And I came to **Philadelphia.** Came to **Philadelphia** and we are living – I – I lost in my family 29 people. If I would count better, maybe there is 39. It is hard to – to – to – to tell, because in **Warsaw** was a tragedy. My father died, the Americans stopped to send the money, and a guy from **New Jersey** came and said, I give you so much dollars, but no more. To work. So. And I never lived so excellent like in the **United States.** And I have such sentiments to **America,** if I would be a young man for [indecipherable], I would go to the be – **America** with arms in hand, because I understand something in – in – in [indecipherable] you know. And we begin to live in a very poor place in **Philadelphia,** very poor place. And the neighbors are sympathetic to – to us. And our family is now already 10

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people. Six grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and even now I haven't here in my pocket money.

Q: Yeah.

A: So – so, for reasons, **America** is for me an idea, you know. Maybe a – and so, together with 40 – 45,000 Jews, we came to the **United States**.

Q: In 1963. In 1963, or 1967?

A: Probably it was '63. I don't remember exactly.

Q: It's not that im –

A: You know.

Q: It's just a –

A: My – my – my memory is not so –

Q: If my memory will be like yours is, I will be grateful. I will be grateful. Is there anything else you would like to add that we didn't cover in this interview?

A: Thank you. I am very glad that I hear such things from you. But if I will be healthy, or almost healthy, I will go again to **Druskininkai**, in the – to write that too much Jews are coming. Go to **Madagascar**. So, the people with some **milosc varsna(ph)**, **milosc varsna**.

Q: Does **milosc varsna(ph)** mean, feeling of warmth, feeling of affection, is that what it means? **Varsna(ph)**, does that mean spirit?

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A: I don't know if it is so exactly, but **milosc varsna**(ph) it is the – the feeling that I am a man. So, this is very important for me, and my grandson. This is the answer.

Q: Thank you. Thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

Q: And this –

A: Thank you.

Q: You're welcome. And this concludes our interview, the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview, with Mr. **Norbert Nahum Krasnosielski**. Thank you very much.

A: Thank you, thank you.

Conclusion of Interview