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You said you were really miserable during your time--

When I was in Moscow.

When you were in Moscow--

Right

Did you have friends at all. Were the other children helpful?

All the girls who lived with me in the dorm were, maybe, if not my age maybe a couple years older. There were three other girls, who were also partisans, who were also flown in to Moscow.

And this is how I ended up in this school, because I met them somewhere in Moscow. We said, what are you doing? They say, well, we go to school in here. We work. Oh, great, we'll be together.

So there were four of us. And we aroused a lot of interest on the outside. They didn't know how starved we were. But one painter from the-- it's called TretyÃ¢kovskaya Galereya-- it's a very famous museum in Moscow-- it's the equivalent of our East Wing, or whatever-- came and had us pose for a painting.

And they called us the three partisans. And we were three girls. And we were sitting for her. And we never saw the finished product. But apparently people did see it in the gallery. We just posed.

And I don't know how she found out about us, or who told her-- in the middle of all this [INAUDIBLE] the head there. He was sitting-- we posed for her for the portrait. And apparently it did end up in the gallery. You see on one side, you had this very deep gratitude-- patriotism-- and willing to make your life a success and see the Germans you know, do away. But the conditions, you had to be very hearty.

Like in Moscow, it was very-- for breakfast, they would give me-- after working a whole night [? at least ?], I would come. And they'd give me 200 grams of bread, which was like a slice. And then a bowl, which they called it soup. It's more like [INAUDIBLE] or something. And then you take this hot thing, and then you went another window.

And there was a girl standing there with a bowl. She had oil in it. And she would take one little teaspoon of the oil and pour it into your soup. This was the fact. So you had the 200 grams of bread, and you had that so-called soup.

And because of that-- of malnutrition-- this is why I had all the illnesses. If I lived at this country, I probably wouldn't make it. There was no lack of, probably, vitamins. Whatever it is, I had all these illnesses.

So I didn't have it in the partisans, because we were never hungry. Food was constantly [INAUDIBLE]. But here-- and I had nobody to complain. Because you don't complain during the war. They would tell you, how dare you to complain? Look at this, people are dying on the front.

And we did you a favor, and we saved your life. And we brought you to this country. And you don't have to fight. How can you even ask for anything? They would turn around psychologically. They would make you feel guilty, and you apologize to them, rather than them apologizing to you-- sorry, we cannot accommodate you. This is typical propaganda, that they make you feel like, you know, how dare you?

s so this was, like, one side-- you felt happy being there. But I could not handle the loneliness and the uncertainty, and also the work. 12 hours for a 14, 15-year-old kid with a stint on their leg. You know, we didn't having a breaks-- like coffee, or something.

The only place we could rest, we would go to the ladies room. And a lot of the girls would come there. And then we'd sit on the floor and fall asleep, until I our supervisor would come. And she'd come-- I remember her face. Oh, what do

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you think you're doing in here? You know. Get to work. Get to work. And then get all up. This is where we sneak in a little sleep.

And then when the session was over and the [INAUDIBLE], we would trudge through this very heavy snow. And Russian snow is not our snow. I had to walk back to the dorm. I don't know how much. It was a mile, or something.

You put your foot in, you had to drag it out. I had a hard time getting out. And there was nothing waiting for you in the dorm-- not like something hot. But you kept quiet, because you do not complain. They brought you here. They giving you your life, in a sense.

And everybody suffers. Everybody suffered in Moscow. And if you were starving-- anyhow, that's a story all by itself. But the surprise of my mother coming without any warning-- no letters, or something.

One very pleasant thing happened when I was-- no, two things happened. When I was once walking to Moscow, I was walking down the street and very depressed. And I hear ahead of me a few people are walking. And they speak Yiddish. And I followed them. I didn't have the nerve to go up and say, I am Jewish, too. And I don't know what they were talking. But just to hear the Jewish thing-- voice-- Jewish words-- got me all choked up. And I was feeling, well, maybe there are some other people like me. I don't know where it came from.

And another thing is also the head of our partisans sent-- Medvedev gave his address of his wife in Moscow, to give to me to go visit her. And I did go to see her--

Oh, you did.

--to her apartment. It was very nice place. I met his wife. And then she gave-- she saw how probably dehydrated and hungry. She served me borscht, from beets. And she says, would you like to eat some? I'd say yeah, yeah, yeah.

She gives me the borscht to eat. And I eat and eat. But then there were still pieces of beets left. And I remember my mother telling me, it's not good manners to clean a plate up. You must leave something in the plate. It's not nice. Oh, this is strict.

So I left a little bit of the borscht on the plate, even though I was dying to eat it. But this is how my mother taught me. And the upbringing I got at home wasn't prepared for war, and it wasn't prepared for something like this.

But it was very uplifting to talk to his wife. And she wanted to know how things are doing in the partisans and what was. So there were little things, which were like pleasant things, happen, if you can say. But as I think back, I consider it the hardest for me because I was alone. I had no family. I didn't have p--. I wasn't prepared for it with all the-- And the uncertainty--

Because you didn't know what was happening.

I didn't know what was happening with the partisans. Because just because they felt secure when I was there, they were always subject to bombing, or somebody could turn them in and bring the Germans there-- the Nazis. And this guy, Kuznetsov, even though he impersonated a Nazi-- and he felt very secure.

If they would have caught him earlier, and they would torture him, he could have told a story about us. They had to be very careful about how to get around. So I didn't if I was going to see my parents or not. It was very difficult. But everyone suffered in Moscow at that time. It wasn't just me. This was the time.

So when my mother brought me back here-- back to this Ukrainian territory-- and we met some other survivor relatives. We got together and were overjoyed. We went to Rovno. We waited there for a year, and I enrolled to a regular school. And it's a Russian school. And we were getting help-- I don't know which organization-- with food in Rovno, because nobody worked.

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And my father and my uncle, they would go in the streets of Rovno. And if they would hear somebody talking Jewish, or something, they would come up and say to them, [NON-ENGLISH]. You know what that means, right? [NON-ENGLISH] means, are you Jewish?

if the person said, yeah, because-- so they would right away bring them to our house, because they knew he's a survivor alone, and feed them. And said, if you don't mind sleeping on the floor, you can share our house. It was constantly. They would go on the streets. And you'd see somebody who was alone and a survivor. They would try to help them.

So were you able to go back to your house?

No, that wasn't ours. We never went back to Malinsk.

You went to Rovno?

We went to Rovno. Because, Malinsk, first of all, there were all the families killed. We wouldn't go back there. I wouldn't even go even today. Basically, the people down there, they were very antisemitic. And they were so glad to get some of the property, or something from the Jews. And they were certainly not going to try to save us. They were sorry we survived, probably. No, we never went back. We went to Rovno. Rovno had a bigger population. It had more people. It was more modern. It was not Malinsk.

So your mother rented a place? Did your father come soon?

Oh, you mean after my mother brought me back from Moscow. She brought me right back to my father, who was already in-- it's near Rovno-- [? Kostopol ?]. And from there we decided to go to Rovno, because Rovno was a bigger city. And we felt safer. There shouldn't be any pogroms. We will be more protected. Yeah, we were reunited after my mother brought me back.

And you said that the Russians said that your mother had to promise that you would go to the school?

Yes. Yeah.

But there was no school.

There was no school. I think it was just propaganda. They had a good excuse to let me go. The Russians are soft hearted. And they weren't going to deny a mother to reunite with a child. But the same, they did train me. I was starving. And they had to show some kind of precedent-- say, oh, you are going, but under this condition-- so other people wouldn't take off. I don't know what was the reasoning behind, but they let Mom take me home.

Did you go to school there also?

Yeah. When I came to Rovno.

No, no. I mean when you went to Moscow.

Yeah. It wasn't the regular school. It was a technical school. It was called a Tekhnikum in other words, everything we studied had to do pertaining to machinery and metal melting and stuff like that. We all hated it, because we were sitting hungry. And we learned how to get around our teacher. He was hungry, too. And we were all sitting at the tables. And somebody would bring a piece of bread, or a slice of bread.

And he would come into classroom and look at it. And this would completely change his mind another way. Oh, you got bread. So where did you buy bread?

And you would spend a whole lot talking about food-- forgot about lecturing [INAUDIBLE]. That's why we played tricks on him, because food was the primary concern. But this was what you call technical school, to prepare us to go

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work on the factory 12 hours. This is it.

And your mother knew where to find you?

I didn't know how. She knew by word of mouth where we are. But the fact that we know-- she knew it. She knew it. Because some people would come from the Party zones and maybe fly back. I don't know how she knew, and even find the factory. I don't know.

Yeah, because Moscow is not small.

Well, this is not small. It was a town called Lublino. You had to take a train to get there-- like a streetcar. And we lived in that city-- Lublino-- where the factories were. Moscow, used to go in down there for just maybe sightseeing, or if I had some business to do. But basically the city I stayed in was called Lublino.

And I know somebody who went back there. And they say, there's nothing left there anymore, where the Tekhnikum was. There's no more where the dorm was, or something. I didn't cry. [LAUGHS]

And how did your mother get from the partisan group to where you were? By train?

Yeah. She had a lot hutzpah. And she had a medal that says that she was a partisan-- a recognition. And my mother was very fiesty. She went to a military train, that was going to Moscow. And there was nothing but for military people. And she went in. She says, I was a par-- and I have to go see my daughter.

And she went to talk to somebody up high there-- whoever it is. And they let her get on the truth. There was a military train. If anybody could do it, my mother could do it. That's [INAUDIBLE].

So she got on the train, and I didn't even know she was coming. I didn't know. She had to get special permission from Rovno to be able-- who went to Moscow after the war. It was forbidden. So she knew how to get around. And they respected her-- whatever.

This may sound silly. As much as I promised my mother-- to myself I was saying, if we ever are reunited, Mom, I will do everything you want me to do. And within an hour--

[LAUGHS] You weren't. My mother says to me, what are you, complaining? Look, you've got the bed and this. I said, Mom, wait till you stay here a couple and you see what they give us to eat. And she lavished on her the praise. She was in the partisan, you know? But anyhow, I wasn't very easy child.

So you started complaining right away?

It didn't last very long-- the truce. Truth, truce.

Right. And your prayer to God didn't last too long?

You [? didn't ?] [INAUDIBLE]. Yeah. But then when I came home-- if you want me to tell you about how the war finish. We leave Rovno. I was going to Russian school. And we knew that the war wasn't over. This must've been maybe in the spring or something of '44.

And then during the night, we hear shooting. We heard shooting going gone and all this. And we said, oh, boy, apparently the Nazis are coming back. The front turned around, and they're coming back.

So we jumped out of the bed and laid down on the floor, because we were afraid the bullets will come from the window. And we lay there until daybreak. Finally, when the sun came out, somebody in our group came out. They says, let me see what's happening. Are they really here?

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And he goes out and finds out they were shooting because the war was over. They're celebrating the end of war. And they were just shooting-- what do you call it? What do you call it?

Blanks?

The bullets. Not the rockets, too. But it was a happy occasion. It wasn't to kill anyone. Well, we couldn't believe it. We couldn't believe it. We were never secure. We never knew when the front was going to turn around. The Germans are going to come right back.

So the war wasn't over for you at that point [INAUDIBLE]?

For us it was over. This is was May 8, 1945 when the Nazis declared the war is over. And in the same time, an order came out in the Ukraine and Russia-- all Polish citizens who want to return home may do so.

And because we were Russian citizens-- not Russian, excuse me-- Polish citizen-- we decided, let's go west. Let's go as far away from here as possible. Let's go to Lodz, which is in the west part of Poland. And we'll come there. We'll see where we go from there. It was on our mind to get out from Poland. It was a cemetery for us-- and the Ukraine. Everybody was killed.

So we got on a train, and we came to Lodz. And in Lodz, we found an empty apartment-- because there were a lot of them that the Germans left. They ran away. And I lived there. We lived there for a year.

Again I had to learn the language-- pass exams. And I went to Polish gymnasiums, which is the same like equivalent of a high school. But we felt better. The Germans were defeated. And there was already contact witih Israel. And there was an embassy in Warsaw.

So my parents decided to go to Warsaw and get in touch with the embassy, and see what they can do for us. I don't believe I told you what-- oh yeah, I told you a thing about why we never got on the ship, because the war.

So we thought maybe they'll honor papers and say, yes, you can go ahead to America. Well, it didn't work this way. The embassy in Warsaw was powerless. But they had in Poland at that time trains going all from Poland all the way to Germany. They call it the return home trains, that people who the Germans took to Poland, or Polish took the Ger--. Everybody could return to their own country.

So after living one year in Lodz-- and when this was offered, we got ourselves one of those trains that say, let's go to Paris. Let's go as far as we can away from here. By then our family in the United States knew already that we survived, because of that little card I showed you-- that little card, where my father wrote the address, to let relatives know. So they knew it from [? Oscar. ?]

So we got on those trains. They were cattle trains. It went from Poland all the way to Paris. Paris was much better in many ways. They had to hire us. They had a lot of Jewish organizations. And we lived with this family, which were wonderful to us-- the Mann family.

They were actually related to my uncle. And we stayed with them until we find that he did get visa to come to this country. But I worship [INAUDIBLE], then what do you walk around don't see anybody calling you names. I could go to school. I could go to the opera. I could go to culture and all this-- come when I want.

I mean, this was unbelievable to me. And my father got a job, also. He worked in some organizations. But there were a lot of refugees in Paris. They were put up in hotels. And the joint organization, I think, paid for them. And they had cafeterias where everybody could go once they get a hot meal.

And guess where was the restaurant. It was on Rue des Oiseaux. We used to called Goldbergs or something now, it's called now. It's right on the corner.

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And we used be able to go and get a hot meal. And by then, once we'd got in touch with our family, they knew what's going, they could start making efforts to bring us to this country.

What was it like in Lodz for you for that year after the war? Because a lot of survivors came to Lodz and registered and tried to find out what was going on in various places. But was that [INAUDIBLE]?

It was a stepping stone. Because you came to Lodz. It was a city. It was not destroyed by bombs or anything. But it I helped you get in touch with the world. You can take a train from Lodz and go to Warsaw, go to Krakow, something. They were, I think, embassies in Warsaw. And communication was better.

And there were Jewish organizations. And I belonged to a youth organization. And people were all trying to find ways to leave Poland. Poland was not secure. So the [INAUDIBLE] for us was pretty good. But we knew that, also, we don't want to stay here. Our goal was really to come to America, and once and forever be united with our family, who wanted us to come-- my mother's brothers and sisters.

Is that the major reason why you wanted to come to the United States?

Oh, no, not only for this. We had a big family here. Well, the major, yes. Because some people went to Israel. But our relatives-- and I should mention the Rozanskys, the Weinsteins, and Burkes-- they said, no, you don't go anywhere. You're coming once and forever to America, and so we'll be all together once and forever.

And it took them over 10 years. It's a miracle that we survived. And then we started building a new life in here. It was adjustments. For me it was harder, I think, than my parents. Because when I came in here, it was-- from my Paris, what was it? Maybe 19 or 20.

Age wise, I wasn't a child any more, even when I was in Paris or in Lodz. I lost five years of life-- no school for five years. And when the war was over, I was walking around with my friends-- survivors. And we were pondering these very-- quite existential questions.

But what is the meaning of life? Why did you kill those people? How come we survived. We were old, in a sense. We were kids, but in our mind we were wondering, is this going to be for good or something?

So even when I came to this country, my contemporaries weren't thinking on my level. I wanted Frank Sinatra and all this [INAUDIBLE]. And it was a different thinking. And it was a big adjustment, again, to fit in-- into the young people in here. Because they didn't understand. I used to my cousins always, what was it like in America here during the war? Did you know what was going on?

And I understand that till the United States entered the war, you really didn't know much, do you? I don't know.

Or did people not pay attention?

Right. But later on, when they came in. And my cousins used to-- I said, did you have the windows covered? Did you have bombings, or something like that? But nothing comparison with what we went through.

So I had adjustments from the beginning, each time I come into the country. I have to learn a new language. I get this a year later, again. But the main thing is I just wanted to say that I feel so blessed. And I'm so full of gratitude that after all that, I have made it.

When I look at my life I say to myself, I feel like I lived nine lives, not one. Because each life, each country I lived in, had its separate, maybe, help, but also problems and adjustments and all this.

So I am happy with my family. My husband, my children. And they all are wonderful. A wonderful husband. We're living here-- as I said, this summer, we were married 60 years.

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Wow.

And I also got my education. And I missed five years of not going to school at all. So I was able to go to college, and went to the University of Maryland and got my degree. And I started going, in fact, for a master's degree too. But then I went to work for JSSA, because they needed people who knew Russian.

And later on, I had two interesting jobs. But I had to wait until my children got bigger. And then I worked for JSSA as a social worker, helping to resettle the Russian Jews that came in here. I knew Yiddish and I knew Russian, so I helped resettle them in the area.

And then when they stopped letting the Jews out from Russia, I went to the Library of Congress. Should I stop? OK. You should pat me on my back. That's the only way you can stop me talking.

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