

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Sabina Berggren  
January 30, 2015  
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## PREFACE

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**SABINA BERGGREN**  
**January 30, 2015**

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mrs. Sel – **Sabina Soltysiak Berggren** on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in **Flossmoor, Illinois**. Thank you very, very much Mrs. **Berggren**, for agreeing to speak with us today.

Answer: Thank you.

Q: And to share your sper – experiences, to share part of your life story, and what you and your family went through during World War II. Before we get into the war years, I'd like to talk to s – at some length about what life was like before the war. So, I'm going to ask you a number of questions about that, starting with some of the most basic, such as, could you tell me the date of your birth?

A: I was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, 1932, and e – I was born in **Jarocin**, which is near **Poznań**, in western **Poland**.

Q: And what was your name at birth?

A: The same as it is now, **Sabina Soltysiak**.

Q: **Sabina Soltysiak**.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have a middle name?

A: I do have a middle name, but I'm not using it. It's **Sabina Ursula**.

Q: **Ursula Soltysiak**.

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A: Because Mother first thought of naming me **Ursula**, however, she saw someone that was named **Ursula** that had a runny nose all the time.

Q: So you were born in western **Poland**?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Did you grow up there?

A: No. Very soon after I was born, my father, who was a professional army man, was mo – was moved to eastern **Poland**.

Q: Okay. And so did your parents have family back in the place that you were born?

A: Yes, the – the practic – both sides of the families were in the western **Poland**, yes, and they continued to stay – be there.

Q: Okay. What was the name of the ti – the place again?

A: Where I was born? **Jarocin**.

Q: **Jarocin**. Was that a village, or a town, or a –

A: It was a town, and now it grew into a – equivalent of a county –

Q: Okay.

A: – seat.

Q: And do you have any memories of that place at all?

A: No, because I – I believe we left when I was not even two years old.

Q: Okay. Does this also mean you didn't know your extended family?

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A: Well, we could go back to – to **Jarocin** and to **Poznań** for holidays; at Christmas, and so on. So I didn't – I did know, especially, my maternal grandmother. My maternal grandfather died during the – a-after World War I, so –

Q: You didn't know know him.

A: I didn't know him at all. He died very young.

Q: Did your mother have brothers and sisters?

A: She had four sisters – sisters, and one brother.

Q: And where was she in the family order of the siblings?

A: Hm, hm, hm, my. I am not so sure.

Q: Okay.

A: She probably was second.

Q: Second oldest?

A: Oldest, yes.

Q: Okay. Your father, did he have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, he also had – he had one, two, three, four brothers, and two sisters.

Q: These are rather large families.

A: Yes, they – these are, yes.

Q: Were they city people, town people?

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A: They were – my grandfather, on my father’s side had a – a dairy, so they were farm people, even. And my mother – th-the father originally was a – a nobleman, he had an esta – they had an estate and they raised horses. And af – when the inflation in – started after the first world war, he was taking some horses to sell in **Germany**, and this is what I hear, I don’t know. And he had no money on the way back home, and died.

Q: I see. I see. So she had grown up on an estate, basically.

A: Yes, but not for long, because the father died rather – th-they were very impoverished aft – very, very early in everybody’s life, really –

Q: Okay.

A: – because of the first World War, and then what – the aftermath of the first World War.

Q: What did your parents tell you about their own childhoods and growing up? Did they tell you stories?

A: Not really, no.

Q: No? Neither mother nor father.

A: Neither mother nor father. Probably there was no time for it, because the second World War started, yeah.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

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A: No.

Q: So you were an only child?

A: I was the only child, yeah.

Q: You're the only child. What about your father's service during World War I?

Did you know much about that?

A: Well, th-this is a rather complex story, because since they were living under the German occupation, in a way it was – during the partition of **Poland**, they were born in 19 hun – 1899 and 1902. My father had to serve in the German army.

Q: The Prussian army then.

A: Yes. And he was sent to fight the f – in **France**, and he was wounded in **France**.

By the way, when he went to **Poland**, he stole from everybody th – any photographs of when he was young, so I have – I don't know some people that are in these photographs. But anyway, so he served in the German army, and then he served – he – not served, but then the – in the western **Poland**, in **Poznań**, around **Poznań**, his brother and he were involved in the uprising against the Germans, or the **Pr-Prussia**. And so he fought in that, and then of course, after the **Po-Poland** became free, he was – he m – went to – I won't say it's equivalent to **West Point**, but it was a little bit less than that. I – I – I would say a military junior college, I don't know. But he then finished that, and became a professional officer in the

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Polish army, and then when the **Bolsheviks** attacked **Poland**, after the 1917 revolution, he went – he went to fight the **Bolsheviks**, and he was wounded again. But these wounds were not exactly critical, and so – so then, he continued really to advance to the – the rank of captain, and of course then there was – transferred – as I say, I think I was about two, to east – eastern – southeastern **Poland**.

Q: What were – what was your father's name?

A: **Stanisław. Stanley.**

Q: Okay, and your mother's name?

A: **Valentina.**

Q: And her maiden name?

A: **Granowska(ph).**

Q: **Granowska(ph)**, okay. What place in eastern **Poland** were you – was he transferred to?

A: He first was transferred to a town called **Czarków**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I don't remember much from there, except that we lived – I remember little pieces. We lived in a quarters for officers, and it really surprised me not long ago, because there was a childless couple there, he was colonel. Colonel



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**Pułkanikchok(ph) Czepor-Czeporowski(ph)**. And **Pułkawnik(ph)** chek – **Czeporowski(ph)** really liked me very much, and I – I am not sure how it was, but in the morning I would go – and he was a big man, and I sort of recall jumping on his stomach. But, I looked him up on the – in **Wikipedia**, he was finished in **Katyn**.

Q: Oh, he – he was murdered.

A: Yeah, murdered in **Katyn**. And there is not much of information on him.

Q: So – okay, so you remember that –

A: I remember the name, yeah, and I remember that – you know. And also remember, since it was within the kor – or any military ki – compound, that I very – and my father had a – I think it's called a soldier that was **ordynan** soldiers? I'm not sure how to – he was – he really was like an assistant to my father.

Q: Okay.

A: And he w – he ca – he was from **Silesia [indecipherable]** and he – I remember that when he was – once, at Easter, I imagine, to **Silesia**, to his family, he brought great, great sort of cakes, he made into bunnies, you know. Because the pa – family was apparently in ba-baking, you know.

Q: So, in other words, he would bring those back for you?

A: Yes, he brought them back for me.

Q: Well, children know what's important.

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A: Exactly.

Q: Bunny cakes are important.

A: Right.

Q: And so, did you – you said your father at first was transferred to the –

A: **Czarków**.

Q: **Czarków**.

A: Yeah.

Q: And – and how long did you – do you have memories of **Czarków** then?

**[indecipherable]** memories.

A: Well that's **[indecipherable]** yes, that's very sketchy, yes.

Q: And then where was he transferred to?

A: And then from **Czarków**, he was transferred to **Zaleszczyki**, which is a town – now it's called **Zalishchyky** because it's **Ukraine**. But the name is almost similar, to –

Q: Yeah.

A: – the one that existed. Th-This was a – really a resort town at one time, because it was southeastern **Poland** on the border between **Romania** and **Poland**, and there were beaches there, you know, along that **Dniester river**. So –

Q: Uh-huh, along the **Dniester**.

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A: Yes. So he – he – I don't know the years in which he was transferred. I think he probably has it written somewhere because he – when we came to this country, as I say, he started collecting information and photographs when he went to **Poland**. But anyway, so that was maybe – maybe a – when I was four.

Q: Okay.

A: When we were transferred to – when he was transferred to **Zaleszczyki**.

Q: Was this par – **Zaleszczyki**. **Zaleszczyki**?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And was this part – was this in the mountains as well?

A: Well, the **Zaleszczyki** were really on the river **Dniest**, on the Polish side. On the other side of the **Dniest** was **Romania**, and mountains of **Romania** were there.

Q: Okay.

A: This was like a plateau where we were, not – not mountains.

Q: Okay. Not mountains. Was it a pretty place? From what you –

A: Very beautiful, yes, yeah. And very unusual, because, as I say, it was a southeastern part of **Poland** where even grapes that they had – grapes grew, peaches, apricots, and so on. Which is unusual because **Poland** is a rather –

Q: Northern.

A: – otherwise northern country, yes.

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Q: Yeah.

A: Ca – climate, northern climate.

Q: What kind of place did you live in there?

A: We lived in a – the way I remember, a two story house. So it – the first a – we lived on the main floor, we had an apartment. And this – on the second floor, somebody else lived.

Q: Was this army – army residences?

A: No, it was not any more army residence, it was just on – an apartment.

Q: And your parents rented it from somebody?

A: Yes, there were – that part of **Poland** has a – a really – a large – at that time was called a minority, but a large population of Ukrainians. And this was a Ukrainian lady who built this house, but she herself lived in a – a really very poor little kind of a – a home, and so we – we rented it, or my parents rented it from her, and she very often then would take me to – to a Russian Orthodox church, especially at Easter, I remember that again, because there were birds in cages, and it was an elaborate production, with flowers and so on.

Q: Did you – was it – did you like going there, was it exotic? Yes?

A: Oh yes, yeah, yes. Was very – yes. She was very nice, but as I – we – we just paid rent, and we lived – this was a very nice apartment, and –

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Q: Did you have electricity?

A: Oh yes, yeah, yes. This was a modern apartment.

Q: Okay, so you had running water –

A: **[indecipherable]** running water, toi – yes, yes.

Q: Okay, okay. About how large was the – was the resort town?

A: Oh, that, I do not know. I really don't know, and don't remember.

Q: Okay.

A: But it was large enough to have a – oh, it has also a – a – quite a – a large Jewish population –

Q: I wanted to ask about that.

A: – it was like a **[indecipherable]** eastern. So that I – I really don't know what the population of the town would be, but it had a beautiful Russian Orthodox church, there was a Catholic church, as I remember. And there were – there was a synagogue or two, and there were restaurants, bookstores, because I very – my pa – my mother would take me to book stores, and I loved that, because it's got nice pictures in the books.

Q: Of course, uh-huh..

A: Color pictures. I did not read yet.

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Q: Well, you know, that's what books should have, is more pictures and less words

–

A: I don't know.

Q: – when you're a child. When you're a child, and that's what's interesting to look at, yeah. And the house itself, did it have an orchard, or did it have a backyard?

A: Yes, you know, because this was really, when I look back, a rather sad – as I say, she looked – lived in almost nothing, and there was this nice house, and in the back there was an orchard, and there were apricots growing there. Especially apricots and you could just go and pick them up.

Q: Oh, how lovely.

A: And in front there was a road, and – but it was all – the way I recall it, it was not – there were not many houses around us. Going down towards the river, more and more houses were built like – were there.

Q: So maybe you were on the outskirts of the town?

A: Yeah – well, not outskirts, but I would say outskirts of the area where perhaps people preferred to live, because it was near to the river, and there was a beautiful sight of the mountains on the Romanian side.

Q: I see. And do you remember whether – I mean, if your father had been stationed there, it must have been for a purpose.

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A: Yes. He went – definitely. You know, that was the beginning of everything in **Poland**, because **Poland** lost – for a hundred years lost its independence and since it was partitioned, there were so many entirely different parts – even infrastructure systems in – in different – depending who was occupying that area. My father was – was there, and he was assigned to work with what would be equivalent again here, at one time there was something called **ROTC**, or something in high schools where they – they were preparing the – the young men for – for the service in the army.

Q: So, for a military career.

A: He was like – like cadets.

Q: Yes.

A: Cadets, yes. But these were schools that were not primarily military schools, but he – he was involved in that, and he – he was very much – he was a very athletic man. He was involved in physical education with them too, and so on, playing soccer.

Q: So, he was involved with youth –

A: Yes.

Q: – when he – when he was transferred.

A: Yes, primarily, yes.

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Q: Okay. At home, did your mother keep house, or did she have help in – in keeping house? Tell me a little bit about what her daily life was like.

A: My mother did not have to do an – almost anything. In the house we had a maid, and we also have someone that ad – that brought from the farms, milk, eggs and so on. And she did not have to clean the house. That – th – it was like a housekeeper. She was cleaning the house, and she was living with us, in a separate room.

Q: Was she Polish?

A: Yes, she was, yes. I – I have even a picture of her somewhere. My father stole it from someone in **Poland**.

Q: I'm sure they gave it to him.

A: No, no, he – I – you will see, the back of the pictures are torn out of albums, it's –

Q: Oh, good gosh.

A: No, but anyway – so – no, so she – her work was primarily with what you would s – call here, soup ki – charity work.

Q: Okay.

A: There were many poor people, especially the minorities were very poor. So she was involved with that. And – but we also – and of course Father had that – the



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soldier, which I – I don't know what it's called in English. You know, an assistant, you know.

Q: Tell me what it is in Polish. What was it called –

A: **Ordynans**.

Q: **Ordynans**.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So the soldiers rank was **ordynans**, or his duties were **ordynans**.

A: His duties were **ordynans**.

Q: Okay. Maybe some way we find a translation of it.

A: Right.

Q: Okay. And – and so your mother was involved in a lot of charity work?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Did – tell me a little bit about home life. Was it – what do you remember from –

A: Oh, it was –

Q: – you know, when you –

A: Yeah –

Q: Yeah.

A: – was beautiful. Was na –

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Q: Yeah?

A: Yes, it was too short, but very beautiful. You know, I – I – of – I had nice toys, and I had beautiful books, and Mother and I would go on the – in the horse-drawn carriage really, to stores to buy books, and I remember a few instances – and of course, there was this orchard in the back, and it was beautiful weather. The weather was – in summer is very beautiful in that part of **Poland**. We would go to the river, to the little beach – at that point in the beach was nothing like it is now, what I see. But I also remember at one time on the beach there was a huge commotion because a black man came. And they – nobody in **Poland** yet saw any black people. But I will tell you that I already had a black doll.

Q: You did?

A: Yes. So, you know, we couldn't – I – I don't know how I got it, but anyway, my favorite doll was something which was like not really a doll, but something you put on a bed. It had long legs and so on. So I liked that, and of course later on, I – I received a dog, a little pinscher dog, sort –

Q: A Doberman pinscher?

A: Doberman pinscher. A little guy. And of course, I – I was a rather nasty child, so of course I would – the dog knew how to walk on hind feet – legs, but I would try to put dresses on it, and so on. Terrible. But I also remember that the housekeeper –

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yeah, it's all in bits and pieces, but the housekeeper, at one time, was preparing a cherry cordials or something. The – lots of cherries and she was boiling them. And of course, then she put – had to put vodka in it, or whatever, and I si – I loved those cherries, but they stopped me, because I mean, I almost – almost drunk.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I remember that was very good. I also remember that I did something horrible. I went to my parents' bedroom, and there was a very beautiful crocheted bedspread. I quietly took the scissors and cut it all up.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: You know, and of course to this day nobody knows why I did it, but I did it. But then, since they saw that I was – I did it – you probably – no, you wouldn't know it – maybe your parents were – you know, over the sinks, where the faucet was, there was something hanging there that was nicely embroidered, but – so they took that piece and gave it to me and said here, you want to cut anything, cut that. I never touched it.

Q: Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness. You must have been too small to understand what was going on, you know, what you –

A: Well, let's hope.

Q: Oh dear, oh dear.

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A: So then I also – I remember going – I don't know why it – that thing I remember, ah – going to a – that was like a bar, but not a bar. And then there, on the walls – my father and I went, and it was a big event because my father and I took me there for – he had a beer, I don't know what I had, but on the walls there were figures from **Disney**, you know, there were Seven Dwarves, or whatever.

Q: Well, that's quite a big thing.

A: Yes.

Q: You know, **Mickey Mouse** was born around those times.

A: Yes. And I also, of course, remember I – th-they – my mother – of course, th-there were – we didn't go to stores to buy coats, dresses and so on, but I always – I remember my – some of my dresses, because I liked them so much.

Q: Does that mean that someone would – that your dresses were made –

A: Yes.

Q: – for you, tailored for you?

A: Yeah, oh yes, yeah. Course.

Q: She had somebody do that?

A: Yes, I don't remember the – the seamstress, but oh yes. Well, at that time you didn't have ready-made anything.

Q: Yeah.

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A: Yeah.

Q: It sounds like a very nice life.

A: Was very nice, yes.

Q: Tell me about your father, as far as his personality was concerned. Was he an outgoing person, or a more reserved person?

A: Oh, he – very outgoing, very talkative.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. And –

Q: But he didn't tell you stories from his childhood?

A: No. I believe because they – he was always – I don't remember, you know, sitting down with him. I – I – you – I remember sitting on his knee, you know, on his knees, but I don't remember what we talked about.

Q: Of course, of course, yeah. And your mother? What kind of a personality did she have?

A: She was – she was more reserved. Rather reserved.

Q: Were you more scared of one than the other, or you weren't scared of either of them?

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A: Oh no, I – I – I’m telling you, I – I was a nasty child, I was not scared of – but yeah, I – I think I probably would be more s – would say that I – my mother was stricter with me.

Q: Okay.

A: So, yeah. I was spanked several times, there’s no question. Especially after I – they didn’t spank me after I cutted that bedspread, I am not sure why, but I was spanked several times, yes.

Q: Were your parents religious?

A: Not really.

Q: Okay.

A: No.

Q: Okay. So, you didn’t go to church?

A: We did go to church, but I – not regularly, I’m sure.

Q: Okay.

A: I once remember again being in church, and running to the front of it, that’s what I remember, and they, of course, had to pull me back. But that’s – no. But we were not – I – we were not very religious, no.

Q: And did you start school?

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A: Yes. I started school in 1939. I went to school for two weeks before the war really was ending, and the Soviets entered **Zaleszczyki**.

Q: So, you – you didn't go to school until – you were born in 1932?

A: Yes.

Q: And so you were seven years old?

A: Correct. Six, seven, yeah, mm-hm.

Q: I see. I see, so it was –

A: Because I was born in December, yeah.

Q: Do you have any memories of the summer before the war started?

A: Oh yes, we had a beautiful summer. We went on a vacation to **Ratzkibor(ph)** which is now in **Lithuania**, it was near **Vilno – Vilnius**. And it was a – to this day I remember the beautiful forests, beautiful. And when the storm came, trees were knocked down. I remember being taken by my father, and he was showing it to me. We were – the reason we really went to – to **Ratzkibor(ph)** was because there was a camp for these young guys from high schools and so on, and my father was involved with them.

Q: Oh, I see.

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A: Yeah, they called him **Mussolini**, because he – he always would – he had very nice hair, but he always would really shave his head, because he thought that was really healthier not to have it. Could we stop for one minute?

Q: Of course we can.

A: My nose is running.

Q: Sure we can. I didn't notice, I was so involved in your story.

A: Thank you. From one side **[break]** Just like who a – for the – and my father then was involved with these young people, but he would for the night would come to – with us, to be with us.

Q: So maybe it was the camp name. Maybe **Ratzkibor**(ph) was the camp name.

A: Yeah, but **bor** means a forest, so –

Q: Mm-hm. I see.

A: So, I don't think it was the name of the camp, no.

Q: Okay.

A: I – perhaps, but I doubt it, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: So –

Q: And – and so you really remember that, that summer –



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A: Oh, very well, because there was this lake, and we – Father would take me and the other kids on the boats on – on the lake, and a – as I say, tha – thi – tha – thi – the smell of the woods, I can s-still smell it. On the way there, we stopped in **Vilno** – **Vilnius**.

Q: Right.

A: And the – in **Vi-Vilno** there is a – a – a huge gate, in a way.

Q: That's right.

A: Over the gate there is a – a statue, or a – really a pain –

Q: Picture.

A: – a picture – painting of the **Madonna**.

Q: The Black **Madonna**.

A: The Black **Madonna**, right, and at that – that – that is, as I recall – I recall seeing that. I also recall hearing that even Jews would stop and genuflect in front because it was such a revered painting of the **Madonna**.

Q: Really, yeah?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Well, it – mm-hm?

A: And of – of course I remember th-the Lithuanian food, really, or pole – Polish-Lithuanian food, because we go back in Lithuanian and **Poland** for centuries, right?

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Q: Yes, yes.

A: So, I remember **obwarzanek**, which is like bagels, but with a difference. They were on a piece of rope, and they were little, and rather hard.

Q: That's true. They still make them that way. And that's a lot – that's a lot that stayed in your mind, in your memory for that summer.

A: Oh that I remember, because that was '39 already.

Q: Yeah. Now, in '39, you're a child, you're a little girl, so I don't as – suspect that – that mu – much of the – of whatever discussions might have been, would have – would have reached you, but perhaps some did. Were the grown-ups talking about – about anything that had to do with politics, that you remem –

A: Absolutely, absolutely.

Q: Okay.

A: My parents, since they were brought up in the west, knew **Germany** very well. To this day again, I remember my father putting on the radio, and listened to the insane, hysterical speeches by **Hitler**. And everybody was apprehensive, but when the day came when – a-after – it was already after the war started, and my father – and that – that's a later story, but a – the last days really, of Polish resistance to the – to **Germany**. My mother, to – for a long time was saying that Father said, stay here, stay here. This will be a very short war, because the bri – **Great Britain** will

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be coming to help. Well. But yes, there was a lot of – I could feel that something horrible was coming, yes.

Q: Okay. So your – it reached down to the children, it reached down to you.

A: Oh yeah, we – we knew that sa – something was going on, you know. And th – of course, when the war started, that's another long story.

Q: We will talk about that.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, this last summer, after – after this vacation, you returned to – I forget how to say this.

A: **Zaleszczyki.**

Q: **Zaleszczyki.**

A: Yes.

Q: You returned – the family returned to **Zaleszczyki.**

A: Yes, but I – yeah, and I must say that it was a – again, th-the – it was August alre – mid-August, I think, and you know, war st – was start in sep – September one.

There was – th-they cut the st – we cut the stay short, so it was also already pressure that something was coming. We knew –

Q: Okay.

A: – you know.

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Q: Okay.

A: Because it was August already, so Father and everybody – and th-the camp was closed very quickly.

Q: I see.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay. And you returned then to **Zaleszczyki**.

A: Yes.

Q: And did your father stay around, or did – was he called up for mobilization?

A: He – he stayed around, because he was also not only taking care of the young, but he was involved in the border corps.

Q: Okay.

A: But –

Q: What was the border corps?

A: It was called **cop**(ph). And – but again, I – I am not sure that – there must have been some reason for transferring him from the west to the east. I don't know if that move – I mean, I'm sa – excuse me, I – I'm just overthinking maybe, but I think the move was not smart, because my father and my family didn't know anything about the Soviets, really, they were more anti-German than the – they didn't know about what – what **Poland** endured in – on the eastern front, you know, so –

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Q: Mm-hm, they were western Poles.

A: Right, yeah, you know. So – but anyway, so he – no, he was not called.

Q: He was not called.

A: Th-The – September first came, and I re – that I remember too, it sort of sticks in my mind. I was at home with our housekeeper, and my mother apar – went for a hair – to have her hair done. And I saw her we – ma – the housekeeper, I think, already knew that some – he – she heard it on the radio that the – that the war maybe started, because she took me to the window, and we were all way – both of us are waiting for Mother to come, to sort of confirm it, or whatever. And yes, she came, and it – and again, it was sort of a – something horrible. Something is happening anyway, horrible or not, yeah, at that point.

Q: What was your housekeeper's name?

A: Don't remember.

Q: And your dog's name?

A: **Sotka**(ph).

Q: **Sotka**(ph).

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And another question, since you were so close to the Romanian border, you were separated just by the river **Dniester**?

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A: Yes, mm-hm.

Q: Did you ever go on the other side?

A: Ah yes, I was very proud of it.

Q: Okay.

A: A bridge was built across the **Dniest** from **Poland** to **Romania**, and there was a dedication of the bridge. And Father and I – I don't know if Mother went with us – went across the bridge, you know, because this was an opening, and I-I guess he was one in – of the sort of –

Q: Dignitaries.

A: Yes, maybe. So we went, and I was then, again, very proud of myself, because I brought home, in a bag, grapes. And it was smuggling them, you know.

Q: Oh my. The grapes were from the Romanian side?

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: Was there a similar town on the other side of the river? Or was it – or was there no settlement there?

A: No, the – on the other side, a mountain is, really, mountains were. There were mountains. There were – was no beach or anything on the other side, very –

Q: No town?

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A: There was a town, but I don't remember the town at all. I just remember go over, and then coming back. And I guess my mother wasn't there, because I brought these grapes to my mother, I was smuggling them.

Q: Do you remember the color of the grapes?

A: Green.

Q: Green. And so this was your one and only time in **Romania**?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. So the bridge must have been quite new.

A: Oh, brand new, there was the opening of the bridge. I don't know what year it was, you know, I don't.

Q: And – and the bridge itself was – it – did – were motor vehicles able to cross it?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes, absolutely yes.

Q: Pedestrians too?

A: Pedestrians, but – yes, because I – we – we walked across.

Q: And do you remember seeing any of the Romanian soldiers in their uniforms or anything?

A: No, no, n – I don't remember that at all, no.

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Q: Okay. All right. Okay, so September first happens –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – and your mother comes back from the hairdresser, and it's confirmed that there is this war –

A: Yes.

Q: – that has started, and by **Germany** attacking **Poland**. And then what happened?

A: Well then, what starts is, first of all, there are – let me see what comes first? No – yeah, this is what comes first. So then, schools are closed, and my mother takes to schools, all blankets and pillows, and goes there to set up beds, because everybody is thinking that the wounded, and people, refugees would be coming from the west, which is true, they later come. So th-th-the – everybody was preparing for, really, the influx of –

Q: Of people.

A: – people from the west, and – but then also – which was, you know, one night – and now I look, it was foolish, but there were trenches being built so – in case of bombs dropping, we would go into those trenches and hide. We went – when there were alarms, we used to even go under beds, you know, and into the orchards there. But it – when these trenches were being dug, I thought it was great, because they allowed me to do something too, so I was – felt very important, I remember that.



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Q: It was exciting.

A: Absolutely exciting. And then – there were quite a few alarms that the bombs were, but only one bomb f-fell on **Zaleszczyki**, which is am –

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, because was way –

Q: In the corner.

A: Southeast corner.

Q: Yeah.

A: But each time there would be an alarm, I would fuss, and insist that this dog is taken with us, you know, and sometimes wit – they – we were – w-we didn't know whether the bombs were co – ba – the planes were coming to bomb us. So I can imagine they were very mad at me, because they would has – somebody would have to go back to get the dog, and then we'll hide, you know, and – as a matter of fact, very often we hid in that hut where our landlady lived, under her bed, because it was lower, and so on.

Q: So her hut was close to the house she had built?

A: Yes, yes, it was very unusual sit – set – set-up, so to speak.

Q: Well, I could understand if she had no income, then the house she built provided her with income.

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A: Exactly, exactly, yes, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because I don't think there was any th – she didn't have any relatives there, that's true.

Q: Yeah.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Was your father with you during these alarms, or was he first –

A: No, he was away. I don't know what – you know, what he was doing.

Q: But he was still in **Zaleszczyki**?

A: **Zaleszczyki**, he – yes.

Q: Okay. All right, so there were alarms, there were trenches being built, the school was being prepared for refugees. What happened after that?

A: After that, I remember also – that must have been already when the family from **Warsaw** came, as a refugees to our home, because I wa – I remember that the – the son in that family, who I don't know, he was me – he was like a teenager maybe ni – maybe 18, and this – took me, with little flowers, and lifted me wa – up at one time, as the recruits were going to be put on – they had trains to go to fight the Germans in the west. So, you know, I was giving flowers to – to these soldier.

Q: Oh. So, were you close to a train station?

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A: Yeah, there was a train station there.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't know how close we were there.

Q: Oh, I see. It sounded like you were saying that –

A: We probably went there and – knowing that they will be leaving, you know, everybody was saying goodbye, and you know, really trying to-to – to-to give them courage to go, you know.

Q: Mm-hm. So you remember that incident?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And – and so, why did the family from **Warsaw** come?

A: Well, they came because the – **Warsaw** by then was being bombed, life wa – bombed out, and they came to us because my father and the – the father of that family that was – the name was **Zhaglietski**(ph). He – my father and he served together in **Czarków** before that guy wa-was transferred to **Warsaw**.

Q: Got it.

A: And there are some politics involved, but I won't go in.

Q: Okay. Well, does that have something to do with your story, this – the –

A: No, no, no.

Q: No. Okay.

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A: Yeah.

Q: And so they came, and they were now running from **Warsaw**.

A: They were running from **Warsaw**, yeah. There were many refugees coming, even – of course, they knew us, so they stayed with us. It was –

Q: Okay. Why would refugees be coming to your southeastern corner of **Poland**?

A: They were – because, a-as the armies were retreating, they were retreating to the east –

Q: Okay.

A: – unaware of the fact that there is this non-aggression pact between **Russia** and **Germany**. Everybody was waiting for help from the west. **France** gave up, and **Great Britain** didn't come in strong enough and early enough to do anything, and the Polish army was being defeated, and as – si-since the Germans were coming from the west, and the Poles were fighting them, th-the soldiers and the officer, everybody was really ret-retreating to the east and, you know, standing for a while against the Germans, but then defeated again. And then on – Russians came in from the east, you know.

Q: Did anybody cross over to **Romania**?

A: Yes, very many people crossed to **Romania**, especially dignitaries from **Warsaw**. So they – my – my father, and the last days, this is what I remember,

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when he said to us, you stay here, you know, because it will be blitzkrieg, short war. And yes, he, with really an adjutant to the unfortunate leader of – military leader of **Poland** at that time, tha – he crossed, with his family, with my father, with the guy from ma – my father’s friends from **Warsaw**, while his family wer – the wife, their daughter and son, stayed with us.

Q: The military leader of **Poland**?

A: No, no, no.

Q: No, no, no.

A: The wi –

Q: The wa –

A: – wife, daughter and son, of my father’s friend

Q: **Zhaglietsi**(ph)?

A: **Zhaglietski**(ph).

Q: **Zhaglietski**(ph).

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you – but the military leader of **Poland** also traveled – went to **Germany**.

A: Ah – yes.

Q: What was his name?

A: Ring – **Rydz Śmigly**.

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Q: Okay.

A: Mm-hm. And his adjutant really, which we knew, was **Mineke**(ph).

Q: Mm-hm. And did you see these dignitaries crossing?

A: I saw cars.

Q: You saw cars.

A: You know, black cars going fast, fast.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't remember, though.

Q: Did people think that they're being abandoned?

A: Absolutely, you know, th-th-this was not the way to do it. Now, on the other hand, if they didn't – even my father didn't cross, and th-they were then interned in Pole – in rem – **Romania**, in camps, because **Romania** joined the Germans, as one of their – for – for a while there was a neutral country. Many people also crossed to **Hungary**, you know, but absolutely, yes. On the other hand, they were in between **Germany** and **Russia**. If the ones that were caught by the Russians ended up in – in the slaughterhouses in **Katyn**, **Starobielsk**, you know, and so on, so it's the 15,000 Polish officers and policemen were just shot in the back of the head, you know.

Q: So at that time your father also left –

A: Yes.

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Q: – with them.

A: Yes.

Q: Was your mother upset that he did? Were you upset that he did?

A: No, everybody was saying well, the war is going to be short, don't worry. The – the – ar – our – our allies will come and save – you know, help us. And as I say, nobody – that I know for sure, nobody thought that the Russians will just enter from the east, you know. There was no resistance to them, you know.

Q: And so this must have been in those first two weeks?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Do you remember saying goodbye to your father?

A: Yes, that – that's what I remember, that he – I was on the knee and he was saying stay here, the war will be – it will end soon, you know, goodbye. So I was assured, and I – throughout then – you know, I don't – what we went through, I always was sure that my father will save me from everything.

Q: Yeah. So your – your mind was put at rest.

A: Oh yes, I never – I don't – I – I was never – maybe I was apprehensive when all this was going on, but I was never afraid, somehow.

Q: And yet, on an individual level, no, but aw – yet, people felt abandoned, I –

A: Oh, absolutely.

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Q: – imagine. Okay.

A: Mm-hm. Well, you know, maybe not at the time when all this was going on, because nobody had the time to think about it. But – but right now, you know, years later, after we escaped from really, **Russia**, everybody starts to talking about it, yes. But no – nobody considered **Śmigły Rydz** to be a good leader anyway.

Q: Ah. So –

A: You know, he – he – he succeeded **Pilsudski**, who was really revered, you know, h-his heart is buried in **Wilno**.

Q: That's true.

A: Yeah.

Q: That's true, yeah. And so, hi – the successor, I can't pronounce his name – how do you say it?

A: **Śmigły Rydz**.

Q: **Śmigły Rydz**.

A: **Rydz**.

Q: **Śmigły Rydz**.

A: **Śmigły Rydz**, yeah, it's [indecipherable] **Rydz**.

Q: He – why wasn't he respected as much?



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A: He was not respected because I – I don't believe he has known much about politics. There were many factions at that time in **Poland**. I – y-you know sa – some people wanted s – si – thought that it would be better to sort of la – give concessions to the Germans, you know, because it supposedly all started about the corridor up there, which is f – a farce. Some said, well, you know, we are Slavs, maybe we should be looking to the east. So then – **Poland** was only free for how many years? Twenty-five years or so? And that – so there were – there was a lot going on in politics. Of course, I'm reading about it now, so I don't know.

Q: So this is not your direct memory –

A: No –

Q: – this is just what you've learned afterwards.

A: – no, no, that's not my – no, no.

Q: No, no. And I try to distinguish that because –

A: Yeah.

Q: – in some ways, we have to know the context, and you can only explain the context from what you find out later.

A: Correct.

Q: But at the same time, we need to know where is it I directly remember this, but I don't, you know – and si – and you've been telling me very accurately.

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A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And – and I appreciate that. You – you dig the trenches, cause they're exciting.

A: Yeah.

Q: Because you're a little girl, you're seven years old, you know, that – that's how children respond.

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Q: And – and so that was the last time you saw your father?

A: Yes, this is the last time I saw my father for 12 – 13 years, you know. So – so then, within weeks, really – I don't know how long after – I don't know even when – when they – this happened, but anyway, weeks later, sometime – by then it started raining, you know, and I remember, you know, statements to the effect, oh why didn't it rain sooner? The times would be – would have been stopped, you know, the Germans would have been really buried in the mud. It was raining very hard, and it – I know now that it was September 17, but I didn't know what –

Q: Did you ever – did German tanks ever enter your town?

A: No, never.

Q: Never.

A: We have not seen a single ger – as I say, only one bomb fell there. No.

Q: Okay. All right, so September 17 –

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A: Seventeen, it – I remember being taken to the window, and it was pouring rain when the so – Russian soldiers were coming in. And they were – again, maybe I don't remember it, maybe I heard it, but they were very poorly dressed. They bayonet – their guns were, you know, on – on pieces of rope, and so on. And so I was taken to the window to just, apparently show – to – to see who was coming, and they were coming and coming. Very soon after, we – schools opened again, you know. Now Russians are in, and while I hated school when the school started under the Polish – you know, when I was still free.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Oh, I just thought it was terrific, because they took me, with a red flag, on a parade. I didn't have to – to – what I recall on the Polish schools is the fact that I had to – to read – not – not to write even letters, but to make little, you know – learn how to stay within the lines. I hated it. I also remember from the Polish school, and I'm not sure why, when the priest came in this long robe, and told us a story, and I thought it was horrific – I-I guess he, I don't know in connection with what, that there was this stork eating frogs, you know. I don't know why I remember.

Q: There was a story and it had storks, and it had frogs, and you weren't very impressed by it.

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A: No. But, when – when the Russians took me on a parade, and told me to wave a red flag, you know, and do nothing really, in school –

Q: That was fine.

A: Yes.

Q: That was fine.

A: Terrible.

Q: Were there still refugees who had wanted to go to **Romania** when the Russians arrived, do you think?

A: Well, there were a – yes, as many wounded soldiers, many wounded officers, many pe – refugees continued to – to really a – during the nights and so on, bribe, or have guides take them over the **Dniest** to **Romania** and **Hungary**. Yes, many pe – many – really civilians also escaped that way.

Q: Even when the Russians were already there?

A: Absolutely, yes.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: Because when the Russians came in, I mean, I think they were rather disorganized at first, that – that – but it was very – it was dangerous to cross the pa – to go across the river.

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Q: Okay. So at one point it wa – you know, when peop – before they came, there was uncertainty when people crossed, in that on the Romanian side, they were interned in camps –

A: Correct.

Q: – but there wasn't any danger from the Polish side, of letting people go. But when the Russians came, there was – it was dangerous then.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, sure. Because that was the border, you know.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: So what else – what else happens? School opened, you had red flags, you went on parades.

A: Yeah, and very soon after, the – there would be – there would be people who knew my father. And I hate to say it, but it was a young Jewish fellow – I – I don't know the fellow, but I know that there were people that work in the city government, and they tried to s – to probably save their own skins, too. So this young guy, one night, I remember him, how he looked, came with a group of what's ek – now **KGB**, or was **KGB, NKVD [indecipherable]**

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Q: NKVD.

A: Yes.

Q: NKVD.

A: Soldiers, they would – they surrounded the house outside with these huge guns, and they always would come, as I recall, we would be sleeping, and around – soundly, and there would be pounding on the door, and they would come in, surround the house, go in, stand inside. They would line us around at the walls, and they would start saying, where is my father, and he – he's going to be hanging, or you know, we cut his throat, and so on. And my mother did not know Russian. She knew German quite well, but not Russian, and had one time – this – this – this was funny. I, of course, don't remember that, but I heard it now several times. I mean, before, several times. They came, and they would open everything and steal, because they would – they had let all the criminals out of the prisons, saying that they were really suppressed by the [indecipherable] capitalists of **Poland**, right? So they were free now.

Q: So the – excuse me, I'm going to interrupt right here.

A: Yes?

Q: You – you're talking about the first time, and then several subsequent times?

A: Oh yes, yes.

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Q: So was it the same people each time?

A: No, I don't – no, no.

Q: But the first time **[indecipherable]**

A: The first time the guy – the young guy brought them in and – but he then disappeared from the scene. He was never seen before – later.

Q: And did you know him from earlier?

A: Not – not I, but my mother recognized him as a clerk from the city hall.

Q: I see, so she could recognize who he was, the rest of the people were strangers, the rest of –

A: Oh **[indecipherable]** the Russians, really.

Q: Okay, so, now here I have another discrepancy in here. Was it Russian soldiers who came to the house, or these released thieves from the Polish –

A: Russian soldiers.

Q: Okay.

A: Russian soldiers.

Q: All right, Russian soldiers would do the stealing?

A: Oh yes. They – and they would open everything, and you know, ward – it's called wardrobe, I think –

Q: Yeah, a wardrobe –

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A: – inste – because not – not a closet, and Mother had dresses there, and then, you know, we were not exactly rich, but I – since Mother didn't know – this is the story, Mother didn't know Russian, when they said to the **wi(ph) portnikha**, my mother thought that **portnikha** means you belong to some party, and my mother was trying to – Mother said no, no, I don't belong to any party. And **portnikha** means really seamstress, a tailor.

Q: So they thought that she was a seamstress?

A: Yes. So that –

Q: Because they would look at the dresses and see that they were sewn?

A: Yeah, right, yeah, mm-hm.

Q: Okay. Did they take those clothes? Or did they leave them?

A: I don't remember that, you know, I only know that slowly things were disappearing. That I know. From the house. And there was food that also disappeared, and at first we didn't know what was happening to it, you know, the fruit preserves and jams and so on? And one time I went to this – the orchard in the back, and it was our housekeeper that was doing it. She would slowly take the food and hide – hide it behind – I don't know, that wa – that was where some shelves were, we found them. I found them, as a matter of fact.

Q: So in – so i – I mean one could feel like you're being betrayed by all sides.



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A: Oh yes, yes, yeah. Well, let's face it, there were – were some really – Ukrainians didn't like the Poles there.

Q: Well, how was your landlady, how did she behave?

A: Landlady disappeared. I don't remember landlady was doing anything, really. I don't remember what – what happened to her – to her, at all.

Q: Okay. But y – your housekeeper was Polish.

A: Yes.

Q: And she was stealing the stuff.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay.

A: You – ah, you never know –

Q: Yeah.

A: – what happens with people, you know, in – under circumstances, I don't know. I don't know.

Q: How di – how was your mother taking all of this? Did her manner change, did her mood change?

A: My mother was, by then, really very tense and – and on – nervous, you know. I mean, was physically you could see that th – she was changing, yes. And she was als – always a sm – she always smoked, which was not good either.

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Q: Mm-hm. So she was smoking more?

A: Smoking more, bu – and also very tense, as I recall, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Very tense.

Q: So they came not just one time, they came several times?

A: Several times, almost one night after another, and supposedly looking for my father, but it was – I don't – wa – it was extremely difficult for any human being that is thinking or reasonable, to see the reasons why things were happening, they were – and why we were even taken to **Russia**, right? Why? What – how did we contribute to economy of **Russia**? Nobody – right? No ha – right, correct? I mean –

Q: All – all right, so the – this first time they came, do you remember whether it was still the fall, or already winter?

A: Fall. Late fall.

Q: Late fall.

A: Mm-hm. November, I think. Again, it wa – it was rainy season, so that was not yet – you know, winter.

Q: No snow.

A: No snow, no.

Q: What was Christmas like that year?

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A: I don't even remember Christmas, because by Christmas we were already – they came and they told us to get out, and we went on these horse-drawn carts to another town, a si – a village.

Q: Oh, so in other words –

A: They threw us out of the house, and didn't let us take anything.

Q: Really?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: So –

A: But in the meantime – excuse me, I – I just want to make a point.

Q: Yeah.

A: That all this I – also was done because supposedly when the Russians entered, they asked – they wanted to register everybody, and asked people whether it's – they were from – originally from west or east. And of course by then, when we saw Russians, my mother, of course, went and registered that she's from the west. And everybody thought that if – and that's what they – the Russians assured us that if you were from the west, you would go back to say, you know **[indecipherable]** in **Poznań**, where my mother's family was. But this was a trick. It's just to get everybody on the list, to know who is who, where and how. And then that – those

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lists were used to deport us to **Russia**.

Q: Okay, but when you were first taken from your home –

A: Yes.

Q: – that was in November or December?

A: It was getting already cold. I would say maybe beginning of December. I – I don't remember that.

Q: What is that – do you remember the – the night itself?

A: Oh yes, yeah. I mean –

Q: Tell me about that.

A: – again – again, they came, they pounded on the door, surrounded the house, get up, get up. And you know, I grabbed, of course, the dog, and we were put on – on these carts driven by horses, with again soldiers surrounding it. And we didn't know where they would drive us, but they drove us to a small village called **Tluszcz** –

Q: **Tluszcz**.

A: – which means fat.

Q: Okay.

A: But – and they put us in one room. There were the pe – the family of

**Zhaglietski**(ph) there, th-the ones that escaped **Warsaw** –

Q: **Warsaw**.

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A: – except –

Q: The husband.

A: – the husband, and we, and we didn't know what was going to happen then.

Q: But hang on a second. Were the **Zhaglietskis**(ph) still living with you?

A: Oh yes, that – this is the reason why they por – por – were deported to **Russia** with us, yes.

Q: I see.

A: Yes.

Q: So they were still there with you.

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Q: And you said you weren't able to take anything. No food, no clothes?

A: Yeah, no food and no clothes.

Q: And no dog.

A: Dog, yes. I made sure that the dog went with us. And I had a – a small, like a suitcase, you know, and I took that, because I still have it.

Q: You still have the suitcase?

A: Yes, yes. It's little. And it was, as a matter of fact, purchased way back in **Vienna**, when we went, you know, for – on a last vacation.

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Q: Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness. So – so, from your home – did you at least dress like wintertime, or were you put in –

A: Yeah, we sa – we had a co – yeah, I remember having a coat on, yeah. Like wintertime.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes.

Q: And so, with the appropriate shoes, and –

A: Yes, still appropriate everything –

Q: Okay.

A: – yes, for **[indecipherable]**

Q: So not like in nightgowns out on the road?

A: No, absolutely not, no, no.

Q: Okay.

A: We were still dressed – we – we did not suffer from cold, no.

Q: But no valuables, no jewelry or anything.

A: No, everything was left – I mean now, everything you had, you know, what – what you had. Dishes, everything was left behind.

Q: And so then you –

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A: Pictures on the walls, you know, things like that. Oh, by the way, pictures on the walls, and silver – I remember this one time, even prior we – th – prior to when the Russians came, there was somebody, and I somehow recall this was a teacher who lived down the street. And one night the raincoats were put down on the floor, and one – because we didn't have many valuable, but one valuable painting, and then silver was wrapped in different raincoats, and the guy took it, and buried it in his backyard. But I'm sure it's not there.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, so –

Q: So it was supposed to be for safekeeping.

A: I imagine, yeah.

Q: Yeah. So you're taken to this village that means fat?

A: Yes.

Q: And you're put in one room, together with the **Zhaglietskis**(ph)?

A: Yes.

Q: Which, it meant your mother, yourself, Mrs. **Zhaglietski**(ph), her teenage son.

A: And teenage dot – daughter.

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Q: And teenage daughter. So five of you –

A: Yes.

Q: – in this one room. What did that room look like?

A: Well, it was still heaven compared to – to – to what we had in **Russia**.

Q: But you didn't know that yet.

A: No, no.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: So what did that room look like?

A: Like any room. It still had electricity even, I think, as I recall. Yeah.

Q: So was it a small house, a small hut, or –

A: It was on the second floor, so it must have been some two story house. I don't know who lived on the bottom floor. But it was very cold all the time, and we were hungry all the time, because by then there was nothing, and the winter set in. I do not remember – you ask me about Christmas – I don't even – I don't remember, I – there was no Christmas.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: There was no Christmas. A – I – the – my – my father, who was, as I mentioned, he was outgoing, and he was a very fair man, and he – you – minority, so-called



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minorities really, were very much favorably inclined towards him, although sometimes military men were not exactly viewed favorably. So, there was another house where a – a Ukrainian family lived, in **Tłuszcz**. And I also remember that they were very nice to us, and th-that they warned my mother that we will be deported, you know. But what can you do by then?

Q: Yeah, yeah. Was there any word from your father, as to where he was?

A: None. None.

Q: So you had no idea?

A: No, no, no. Well, I – the feeling all – always was, you know, he just wants to – to stay and live, and you don't know what the next day will bring. I – you sort of – you develop that kind of a sense, you know.

Q: So how was your mother, was she s – was she increasingly still more nervous and more tense, by the time you were in this place?

A: Not maybe increasingly, but it was the same, just sort of –

Q: As before.

A: – nervous, yeah. Nervous feeling.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes.

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Q: And how did the – the **Zhaglietskis(ph)** – how were th – how were they behaving?

A: Well, these two young people already, were fine.

Q: Yeah.

A: Mrs. **Zhaglietska(ph)**, whom I called aunt because, as I say, we first met in **Czarków**, you know, so I – I like her very much, and she was a very – she – she was a very – she had the great sense of humor, so even in horrible situations, she would come up with some silly joke, or whatever. But a – so y-yo – she – she really kept us in good spirits. In a way it was – I don't know if Mother and I would have survived without that family. I mean it, because my mother became pr – wa-was not well at all, physically, and otherwise.

Q: Tough, very tough.

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Q: So, how long did you stay in this place?

A: Okay, then we spent the winter there, until April, but April was still very cold, April – so no – we were fore – forewarned that we'll be deported, by the Ukrainians next door, and –

Q: I'm going to interrupt. Was this a large village, or a small village?

A: Very small. A hole in the ground, you know.

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Q: And very far from your home?

A: That I am not sure, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: I am not sure. I don't even remember how long it took us to get there from **Zaleszczyki**, I really don't remember that.

Q: That's close enough that the Ukrainians – neighbors knew your father?

A: Knew – correct, yeah. Because it was a – yeah, it was a – yes, very true.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: You know that everything was sort of sparsely populated at that time, it's not so – yes, mm-hm.

Q: Okay. So they've given you a warning.

A: Yes.

Q: And you know it's going to happen –

A: Right.

Q: – you just don't know when.

A: Correct. And you are a – you didn't know when. So we would go to sleep, but we didn't know whether anybody would be coming or not. So on night,

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[**indecipherable**] was pounding on the door. Very, very cold night, that I remember. Extremely cold, snowing and so on. And the – the Russian soldiers came in, and told us [**speaks Russian**] again, you know, get out, get out. So ya – you are sleeping soundly, and then you are ar-ar-aroused from sleep, it's – it's a – everybody was sort of in a daze, and I remember that pi – Mrs. **Zhaglietska**(ph), who as I say, had a sense of humor and so on, when – she was very emotional, too. So she started throwing things at the soldiers. I remember that, you know. So we – we just put whatever we had on ourselves – and of course I had my suitcase, you know. But the dog, I-I was saying well, the dog has to come with us. But somehow, that – that Ukrainian ca – ne – next door, they'll take – they said they'll take care of the dog. So they took the d – **Sotka**(ph).

Q: The dog.

A: And I also remember – so then they packed us onto these sleighs, horse-drawn, extremely cold. And this one Russian sol – I remember that, he took his coat, or whatever he had on top of his coat, and put it on me, you know, bi – tha – tha-that time I think I – as I recall, I really felt scared.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. Did you cry, do you remember?

A: No, I didn't cry, but I felt it. No.

Q: You felt the fear.

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A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay.

A: I think if I cry, that it would freeze.

Q: And what happened?

A: So, by – it took hours to get to the station, and I don't know what the station was, what the name of the town was. But by then it was light, and there were people standing and some of them with bread, and whatever, to give to us. So then they packed us in – into the cattle wagons. And I don't know how to, again, cause there were – on both sides of the cattle wagon there were these platforms, I think two of them. And we landed on the uppermost one, and I don't know how long it took them, but it probably took them a long – th-the – a whole day. And then they shut the –

Q: Were you able to ta – get any food from those people?

A: Yes, yes, we did. We did get some food from the people, yes.

Q: So you weren't completely – you had at least something –

A: Absolutely, yes, yes. And – but it was great that these people wanted to do it, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: So I –

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Q: How many people do you think were in your wagon?

A: Oh my. Many. I would say maybe a hundred or more.

Q: Really?

A: But I may be wrong. On every platform, 25 or so on every platform.

Q: Really?

A: Oh yeah, packed together, you know. But that was good, because then ke-kept us warm, you know. No, I mean, I'm – I'm joking.

Q: So you were laying down.

A: So was – I remember sitting in the corner, they put me in the corner on the upper shelf.

Q: Okay.

A: And I was – my – my mother and Auntie **Zhaglietska**(ph) and her two kids. And there are – then, on the other side, I know there was somebody that was very sick, old, because he was right – right away lying down. And there was a little baby, I know, but I don't remember much, you know, of the –

Q: You didn't know any of the other people on there?

A: No, no, we didn't.

Q: Okay.

A: So the – so then the journey started, you know.

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Q: Was – were people standing as well?

A: No. Nobody was standing. Everybody was on – on these platforms, nobody was standing, no.

Q: Okay. Was there any kind of heating in the place, in the –

A: I think there was in the – in the middle, in between, something, but I – I frankly don't remember that. I only remember a hole in – in – in the middle, where one had to relieve oneself. I don't remember a little sto – but there must have been something, because it – we would have frozen.

Q: Okay. I have a very sort of unhygienic question, but I want to understand things. Was that hole covered, or was it open?

A: No, it was open. No, that –

Q: It was open –

A: – that's it.

Q: So, not only was it there for everybody to relieve themselves, but cold air could come in through that.

A: Oh yes, yes, yes.

Q: Okay. So the stove wouldn't help much, if it was –

A: No, no, the stove – but I – I – I am – I somehow think there was a stove, but I don't remember it.

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Q: Okay.

A: That hole I remember well. You know, later on, people would say oh, another – the transport already came by. Because if you looked through – you know, you – there were no windows, but if you looked, behind the train there was a – a really excrements all over the tracks. And I – I remember.

Q: Ew. But you could see it, huh?

A: Oh yes, you could see it.

Q: You saw it through the hole?

A: No, I saw it – I – it – it's in the – the wall of the train, there were, you know, a – slits.

Q: Sl – ah, slats, or s – slit.

A: Slit.

Q: Slits, you could see that –

A: They somehow even told me to look. So –

Q: What happened after that?

A: So, for about – for – for three we – 21 days we were inside the-these – these wagons, and the train would go very slowly, stop whenever they wanted, I think. And the only food that we got from – from the soldiers that were all around, and they were, I think in – in the front, in the back of the train, very, very salty dried, or



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frozen fish. And the water you had to – to get by going to the front of the lock – of the train, to where the locomotive was, because these were steam engines, I imagine. You got **kipyatok**, hot water from there.

Q: Is **kipyatok** a Russian word?

A: Yes.

Q: **Kipyatok**.

A: Hot water.

Q: I want to ask a couple of things. Do you remember how many wagons made up this train?

A: Oh, I do not know, but it was long. I don't know, I don't –

Q: So what would they do, they would open the doors and allow people to go to the front?

A: One – one or two would go, they wou – they would have to rush for the water wi-with a pail – I don't know that we had, or they gave us a pail – and would bring it in. But if somebody decided to stay in the train, they will be left there –

Q: On the side.

A: – in the middle of nowhere.

Q: Did that happen?

A: Yes, several times. You know, not in my – not in our –

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Q: Wagon.

A: – wagon, but it happened. But anyway, so they would bring the water, and you – th-the fish you couldn't almost eat, whether you were hungry anything. And that was our – for days, that's what it was, for about what? Twenty-one days was – was no food **[indecipherable]**

Q: So it was one pail of water for a hundred people on the – on the wagon, or however many there were.

A: Well yeah, you didn't – this was hot water, it was cold, so nobody – I – we were not – I don't remember drinking much.

Q: But did everybody get some? Could one pail sa – you know –

A: Probably not. I – I don't remember that, you know, I can't rem –

Q: Okay.

A: – you know. One sort of becomes occupied with what is there, oneself, so to speak.

Q: Yeah, yeah. So they would go to the front, and I – I – I also need to understand, but maybe you can't explain this to me, it was hot water from the locomotive?

A: Yes.

Q: But, I would think that water wouldn't be particularly clean.

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A: I don't know. It was hot – th-tha-that – it probably wasn't, but I – I can't remember.

Q: [indecipherable] yeah. That could be also a technical question. Because maybe

–

A: That's – that's –

Q: – maybe there is a way –

A: Yeah.

Q: – th-that – because if it really wasn't clean, then a lot of people would have died.

A: Oh yes, from that.

Q: Yes, from that.

A: Already.

Q: From that.

A: Right. No.

Q: Well, did anybody die on the train?

A: Oh, the only –

Q: In your wagon?

A: Yeah, the only thing I remember is – is the – a baby that died.

Q: Okay.

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A: And somehow that it was thrown out, you know, the – because the train didn't – you know.

Q: Were there men on the train?

A: Yes.

Q: So there were some places where there were families with men?

A: Correct, yes, yes, yeah.

Q: It wasn't just women and children.

A: No, no.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And do you remember crossing the border from **Poland**?

A: Oh yes, that was very emotional, because apparently someone knew that we were cr – leaving **Poland**, and they started singing, and it was like a wave of singing, you know. So –

Q: Did you stop at tracks to change the rails, or no stop?

A: No. But you are absolutely right, I think there is a different in rails, but I don't remember stopping, or changing rails, no.

Q: What were people saying?

A: Well, they were all crying, and very sad, you know. Very, very sad, I – I –

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Q: Was there a particular –

A: – they were almost not talking, just singing this – we ask you God, to – to protect us, some like – all that – it was not a Polish anthem. I know that some of my friends that were deported say that they were – people were singing the Polish anthem. I don't remember – I remember this religious song, really.

Q: Do you remember it?

A: Yes.

Q: Could you si –

A: No, don't ask me.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Really, please. Because I'll become emotional. I really do. To this day. It's crazy.

Q: You sure you don't want to share that with us?

A: Well –

Q: So that people would hear?

A: This is crazy on my part **[sings in Polish]**

Q: Thank you. Thank –

A: Sorry.

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Q: No, I – I – I – I appreciate that even though there is a cost, that you were willing to do that. I want to have peop – for people to have a sense of – of what – what was going on in the hearts of those who were being taken over – taken across the border.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you see other things through the slats in the windows i-in the car, you know, the sla – the little slits?

A: Yeah, yeah. No. No, I d – I don't even remember looking much, except as – as we – I am – I – I confirmed it with the **Zhaglietska**(ph) – **Marisha**(ph), the – the daughter. I said to her, am I hallucinating, or – I believe when we were crossing the **Ural** mountains from – from European **Russia** to the Asian **Russia**, we stopped; because I remember we stopped, and they opened the doors. And there was a beautiful field of flowers; yellow, I – I – by then it was spring. Yellow, beautiful flowers. And she confirmed, she said yes, it happened.

Q: Okay.

A: Oh, that was –

Q: So your memory was not playing tricks on you.

A: No.

Q: Okay.

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A: It was beautiful. To this day I remember it. Maybe also being cooped up so long, everything looked more beautiful when – when you are in the open, you know?

Q: So – so that – were you allowed to go out of the train at that point?

A: Yes, yeah, I remember being on the ground, yeah. It – again, we were probably in the middle of nowhere, but yes, we were allowed to go out.

Q: Okay. What was your final destination?

A: We didn't know, and they would just put us here and tha-that is a – sometimes the train would stop, towards the end of the journey, and some wagons were detached, and we didn't – we – we didn't know, you know, who – whose wagon will be detached. And then from those wagons, the people would be taken somewhere. And when one point, after about 21 days, the wagons stopped, and it was – wa – we [**indecipherable**] **Kazakhstan**, you know, and they let us out, and they – they – thank you.

Q: You're welcome.

A: And this is how, in the middle, it was steps, open steps.

Q: Fields?

A: Fields, st –

Q: Tell me what did –

A: **S-t-e-p-p-e**, steppe.

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Q: Tell – ex – describe to somebody who’s never been and never will be on a steppe, what does a steppe look like?

A: It’s like an open, flat prairie, going f-forever. Flat.

Q: Does it look just like a prairie?

A: Oh, well, it all depends on the time of the year.

Q: Okay.

A: But i-in the s – in the summer when we were there, the whole steppe, just like the prairie, bloomed beautifully, gr-grass was growing. But I would say it’s very similar to a prairie, yes, mm-hm.

Q: Okay. Did you have any documents with you? Like **I.D.s** or passports, or anything like that?

A: No, I do – no, nothing. No, nothing. We had –

Q: You just had your little s –

A: There was no **I.D.**, nothing, yeah.

Q: So you just had your little suitcase from **Wilno**.

A: Yes, mm-hm, and I – whatever I put there. And I had, apparently, a few of the photographs, because later on I started drawing something on the back, since there was no paper.



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Q: Oh, yeah. So – so people were let out, towards the end of the journey, in different places.

A: Correct. They – and they were then taken to collective farms, different collective farms. But before – I – I – I would like to say something else too. As we crossed the **Ural** mountains, and then I know we were in a – well, really – **Siberia** really is – is just an imaginary kind of a – a place. But where **Siberia** sort of borders **Kazakhstan**, we crossed to **Kazakhstan**. The tow-town was called **Nowosibirsk**.

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

A: Si – very big town. We were taken to be deloused, because the Russian thought that Poles are really a-absolutely uncivilized, because they don't have delousing stations. So we were – we were taken t-to – for a ba – for a shower, or whatever it was, but it – to clean ourselves, and to be deloused. And in order to be deloused, everything was taken from us and put into, I don't know, hot ovens, or whatever. So that no matter where – you had to give everything up, so whoever had anything made out of leather became nothing, because it was shrunken, you know, almost burned. I remember gloves like that.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Leather gloves, and then they come back –

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A: Yes, leather gloves, nothing, you know. So then – so, after delousing and a bath, we then proceeded to – to where – oh, the – our wagons were left behind, and the rest went elsewhere, I am sure, you know, to other collective farms, and we were put on a carts driven then, because that's **Kazakhstan**, oxen. And very slowly we got to this collective farm. The – the village was called **Peschanka**, and the farm was a **sovkhoz** which was even higher than a collective farm, it was Soviet collective farm, and it was a – a – of the name of **Lenin**, you know, **Lenin's**.

Q: So it was **Lenin's sovkhoz**?

A: **Sovkhoz**, that's right, s – **Lenin's sovkhoz**. So, this was a pig farm. So, w-when we arrived there, there were already some deportees from **Russia** itself. When **Stalin** took over, there were ex-Russian Orthodox priests, and intellectual – some intellectuals – I don't know, of course, who was who. But th – I remember they were standing, and as we got off, they were sort of – their heads were – shaking their heads, saying that we – we will get used to it. **Neechyebol (ph) privyknesht'**, you know.

Q: **Neechyebol(ph) privyknesht'**.

A: Yeah. That's the attitude, I think to this day. Now they have **neechyebol(ph) privyknesht'** for **Putin**. But anyway – so, this is how is – our life started on this collective farm, you know.

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Q: Okay, let's cut for a second. **[break]** Okay, before the break, we were talking about the journey to **Siberia**: that it took 21 days, and that by the time you arrived, it was already spring. And that your mother was sent – I mean, you and your mother were sent to a **sovkhos**, **Lenin's sovkhos**, and it was a pig farm.

A: Correct.

Q: Tell me, did anybody come at any time, from the time you were, you know, released from the train, to the s –

A: **[indecipherable]**

Q: – to the **sovkhos**, and tell you why you had been arrested, or where you were going, or – or anything official at all?

A: Not a single word. We just were put a – and there were other Polish family, off the wagon, or maybe two, three wagons, really, quite a few families. And some were from **Zaleszczyki**, the same time – town, but some were not. Nobody told us anything, we were all put into a hall, wh-which was a hall in a school. But that school was not really operating, there were no students there, it was ju – so we were first put to there. And I frankly don't remember what – what we – whether we were given anything to eat, or anything of that sort, but I – th-this was memorable, because we – we were put on the ground, you know, because there was nothing,

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we're just on the floor, rather. And all of a sudden they showed us a movie with **Jeanette MacDonald** and **Nelson Eddy**.

Q: In the middle of **Kazakhstan**?

A: Yes, yes, yeah, I – don't ask me why. So I remember that, and I know that it happened, because I'm – as I say, on one or two photographs I have, on the back, I pictured, I think, I know what – how the costumes were, or whatever. I drew it. So no, nobody was telling us anything, and ah – so that was spring. I remember co – to continue living in that place until winter, or maybe the beginning of – you know, winter starts earlier there. So it was maybe no – I don't know what month, but it was snowing. And one time it snowed so much, and that – there – the – we couldn't get out, because it's similar to what's happening in the east now, or was, anyway.

Q: Okay, well right now we're talking – you're referring to a recent snowstorm, in the past –

A: Correct. **[indecipherable]**

Q: – few days, in January 2015.

A: Correct, on the east coast. You – you couldn't get out, and you sort of looked down and you had to dig yourself out of that of that **[indecipherable]**. It was extremely cold, crowded, and –

Q: This is where you lived for –

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A: Yes, we –

Q: – several months?

A: Several months before we were then allotted, or put into a hut that was half dug  
in the –

Q: Ground?

A: – and half outside. It was made of mud, really, with straw in it, for some reason.

Q: What was the name of this place? Do you remember what the place name itself  
was?

A: The place of the name was **Peschanka**.

Q: **Peschanka**.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. You know, later on I rem – I probably don't – but later on when I started  
writing – I started writing in the camp around **Teheran**. I have diaries, that's why I  
remember some of this stuff.

Q: Oh, I see, very good.

A: I'll show you one of them.

Q: Okay. Okay. So, you were in **Peschanka** for at least four or five months in the  
school –

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A: Correct. That's the – yeah.

Q: – hall, and then in a hut nearby.

A: Yes, right.

Q: Did your mother have to go work?

A: My mother was not working. Everybody else went working, because if you don't – didn't work, you didn't get this bread that's as – you would not call bread, but you know, that was all rations. Was like a piece of heavy mud, but it was fa –

Q: Did you have to buy it, or was it given to you?

A: Hm. No, it was given to us. We didn't get any money, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: No. No money was exchanged. And even if we had money, there was nothing to buy anyway. It was all a – like a barterer economy. You – we – in order to – to exchange anything for food, you gave what you had, you know: a coat, gloves that were shrunken, but a – just a – one item for another.

Q: I see.

A: Material item. So, I did not go to school, but there was a family with us, who were again, teenagers, and they appealed to me because they were teenagers. And all of a sudden it just – I don't – one of them became sort of my teacher, or whatever, and I sort of started writing. I didn't mind writing on pieces of

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everything, and it was no longer a chore. All of sudden I hated every Russian, maybe. I was very mad at them, at what they were doing to us. I don't remember being very frightened, but I was always sort of angry.

Q: Well, it's – it's a very natural response. Your mother – now, you said that when you had, even at that beginning of the deportation, your mother was not quite well.

A: Correct. She had that –

Q: So what happened?

A: Well, she had the heart problem to begin with. So, it got progressively worse, because I'm sure she was very much upset, and so on. So, there were, of course, exiled Russian doctors in **Peschanka** too, but they had nothing to give you to help you when you were sick. But they were extremely good doctors. But they were exiled like we, because they were doctors, they were enemies of the state again. So, they somehow wrote that my mother didn't have to work, which was worse, because then we didn't get that piece of bread, but the **Zhaglietska**(ph) family shared with us, you know.

Q: I see, so you were kept alive –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Beca – and did all three of them work?

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A: Yes. And one of them, the – the brother worked as a laborer in – in some factory with Russian workers. And he – one time obviously, without knowing how, that everyone spied on everyone, said that Polish workers had it much better than the Russian workers, and they – somebody in that factory denounced him. So, of course, I don't know how many days after, maybe very soon after, again, soldiers came, surrounded us, and surro – came into the – where we were staying, and shoved us again together, and took him to the gulag, you know. He was 19. So he ended – and the mother went crazy, you know, just crazy. So that he – he ended up i-in the gulag itself, in the prison camps. Fortunately, he survived, but he had many stories to tell too, as I recall, after that, because he met such strange and different people, and of course was awful, awful. Worse than on a collective farm.

Q: Uh-huh. All because he had said –

A: Yes.

Q: – that Polish workers had it better.

A: Mm-hm. Because you know, what's the purpose of communism, right? To improve the workers' conditions, so –

Q: So then there were two of them left to work for four people, basically.

A: Correct. Yes. But then, the gir – young woman, **Marisha**(ph) – I don't know what she did before, but again, the winter – after winter, then – then there was



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spring, but in the – in the – in summer, I remember that **Marisha**(ph) worked in the pig farm, and then they gave me a job of being her assistant, because you had to sort of herd the pigs in the steppes, otherwise they would go, and be –

Q: They would run away.

A: Of course, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: So – but that was a pass, because then we would si – well, we would really steal from the pigs. Of course, if you were caught, that was gulag again, but fortunately –

Q: How could you steal from a pig?

A: Well, the pigs ate something which is called **makukhay**(ph), and it was what the pigs were eating, and they even – even ha-had some milk, which we never saw. And that we didn't steal, because you couldn't take it with you. But **makukhay**(ph) is a sunflower from which the oil, sunflower oil –

Q: Is pressed.

A: – is pressed out, and it's sort of smooshed together, and it's rather hard, but you know, is given to the pigs, and we ate that. So that was a plus, in a way, because there were some – some vitamins in it, I imagine, you know.

Q: So it was already prepared food for the pigs –

A: For the –

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Q: – for the pigs.

A: Mm-hm, right.

Q: And when you would take them out to keep watch on them, you would be able to eat whatever –

A: Whatever we found, yes. We sometimes also ate what grew in the steppes, like, I don't know, grass that was sort of tasty.

Q: Yeah. And – and so you were helping her.

A: Yes.

Q: You were helping her by – by – how many pigs did you have to keep watch on?

A: Oh, I have no idea.

Q: Was it a lot?

A: Many.

Q: Many, okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And were the pigs slaughtered on this farm as well?

A: No. I – no, they were taken somewhere, and of course, sold to the elite. You know, **Moscow**, **Leningrad**, or whatever – **Stalingrad**, rather, you know, and everywhere.

Q: So, you never saw any meat, you never saw any pork?

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A: No, not a single piece of meat, no.

Q: Okay.

A: No meat. There were some cows around. I don't remember drinking milk.

Basically it was da – the – th-that bread, and what we could steal. Some people worked digging – digging out potatoes, and they would steal potatoes by putting them – you know, you had a coat, and you put it in between. So they – some people were very heavy with that, but y-you were – had to be very careful, because that meant again, gulag, if you were caught.

Q: Okay.

A: But again, the Russians did not have it better, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: Except they ate maybe a li – they ate better, because they probably here and there had the garden, I don't remember now.

Q: So that you were in the hut together with – I forget the fa – na – family name.

A: **Zhaglietska**(ph) family.

Q: **Zhaglietska**(ph) family.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you shi – the four of you, after the boy, and what was his name, the 19 year old?

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A: **Zbishu**(ph) **Zbigniew**.

Q: **Zbigniew**.

A: Like **Zb**

Q: Yeah, so **Zbigniew Zhaglietski**(ph), after he was then sent to the gulag, it was the four of you in the hut.

A: Correct. Yes.

Q: And when you're – when you went out with **Marisha**(ph), was that her name?

A: Yes.

Q: And her mother, to work, your mother was left in the hut?

A: Correct.

Q: Did she cook for any – for everybody? What did she do?

A: Yeah, that's wha-what she did, but mo-mo-mostly, she endless – spent endless day – days being interrogated by – by the secret police in that vi – stupid village, you know.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Oh yes, endlessly. Endlessly asking her wh-wh-where is my father, and that she's spying. I mean, you couldn't do anything there, but – but so, she would go, and I never knew that she would be coming back. And of course, one time she was even denounced, again by a – an elderly woman who had a – a daughter, and the –

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that daughter was sickly, so she did it for an egg, because she thought that the daughter's sickness, which was – I think she had **TB**, but I don't remember now – that eggs will help her. I remember her taking the egg, taking the eggshell, and crushing it, and giving it to that – you know, with the egg, because she thought, you know, that consuming the eggshell would help her. So –

Q: And in order to get the egg, she did – how wa – how did you find out then? What did she do?

A: Well, it – it – it was obvious, because she would – you know, I – I wa – didn't do – didn't look at it that way. I only saw the egg, and then the – I – you know, what – what was said among us, that she was spying on us.

Q: I see. Was sh –

A: On everybody, not only on my mother, yeah.

Q: Was she also one of those who was deported?

A: Yes, of cour – yes, yeah. An elderly woman, and it wa – she was from **Zaleszczyki** too, with her – she was deported with her daughter, and a little grandson.

Q: That must have been very bitter, that –

A: Oh – oh yes, yeah. But somehow – later on we met in **Teheran** with this family, and it – we became reconciled. We did not feel any – because we knew – y-you

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know, people, I – I guess, react strangely, you know, and the – we are hungry, or we are desperate to save your own child. They emigrated to **South Africa** then.

Q: After that.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: From **Teheran**, yeah.

Q: So, your mother, even though she got a certificate that she was ill and couldn't work, was nevertheless called to be interrogated –

A: Oh yes. That wa – that – I – the two had n-no connection.

Q: Nothing to do with it.

A: No.

Q: Okay. I see. She must have been in quite a nervous state.

A: She was, and th-this is – th-this was tough for – for me in that time. So – because I would wait, and I never – and it was endlessly she would be called, and I – it was futile, I mean, just think of it. In the middle of nowhere, wha-what is she doing se – what is she sending, anyway? You couldn't do anything.

Q: Yeah, what could she –

A: There was no electricity, no radios, no nothing.

Q: What kind of a spy could you be?

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A: Right, but –

Q: Yeah.

A: – that's a nice system.

Q: And very tough on a child, very tough. Were you – it sounds like that you couldn't really turn to her for comfort, because –

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, that's true. I – this is why I – as I mentioned before, I think – I mean, unfortunate as it was for them to be deported with us, the **Zhaglietski**(ph) – especially the mother **Zhaglietski**(ph) – **Zhaglietska**(ph) had me – ha-had us both really. Me.

Q: Yeah, so you gu – so if you had some issue, or some problem, would you go to her?

A: Ah, yes, yeah, I would, but I don't remember that I ever really complained about anything to anybody. I was always angry at the Russians.

Q: Are you still?

A: Yes, but I – well, for a while that dropped off, thinking oh, poor people, they – because we knew that they suffered too. But after they won so-called freedom with **Gorbachev** and so on, the **Perestroika**, I said well, great, they will be on the way

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now, let's see. And look what's happening. It – it's really – it seems to be in the Russians' character to – to have some – to – to like to be dictated, and be enslaved, really, you know. I mean, we – they have a dictator now, and for the sake of the great **Russia** – they love their country, they love their piece of land, but th-they – somebody said that the Russians are – are – are good friends, but bad citizens, and I think that's true.

Q: Okay. How did things go forward? How did they progress?

A: So when, as I mentioned, which is very interesting, there were German colonies, or really collective farms, because apparently, when the communism thrived in the – **Russia** – or thrived maybe it is bad word – some Germans emigrated, really, to **Russia**, and they were put on collective farms, and those farms when – were run better than the –

Q: **Sovkhoz?**

A: – So-Soviet – Soviet farms. So, since Mother knew German, in order to get anything again – not for money, but for a piece – say, a good tooth, or whatever, she would go and once she brought honey, I – I – I remember. So the – the – we lived, and we – we tried to – to – to really eat as well as we could, here and there, you know, not to starve. I know I was sick. I don't know if I had scarlet fever, which is now very – or – or something else, but I was very sick once in **Russia**, but not – not



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– not very sick otherwise. And so I – I and **Marisha**(ph) worked with the pigs, and we didn't know what to expect. And wh-when winter came you really – I mean, our breath would freeze. We would be unable, or even don't want to go outside, because –

Q: This was the winter of 1941?

A: Correct. 1941? Yes. So we all, in 1941 then, in June, all of a sudden the news came – and of course there were no radios, there were just loudspeakers sometimes, but that was not announced during – by a loud speaker. Somebody came in June '41, and told us that the Germans attacked **Russia**. So everybody was ecstatic about it, people were happy, including the Russians that were there. Because finally the **Stalin** era will perhaps be finished, you know. And I don't know how, but – how we got the news that the Polish government in exile in **Great Britain** started negotiations already, talks through the – the British officials, with **Stalin**, or whoever was th – one of the other henchmen in **Russia**, they started looking for the deported Poles, you know, and especially officers, you know, so – so –

Q: But you didn't know that at the time, when you were in this farm in **Kazakhstan**?

A: No. No, no.

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A: I wanted to ask something else: aside from how you were greeted by these Russian exiles, who said you will get used to it, you will get used to it –

A: Yeah.

Q: – and the doctors who were good, and tried to treat –

A: Yes.

Q: – your mother, but had no – did you have contact with these Russian deportees and exiles? Did – was there talk and – and communication with them?

A: There was not much talking with them, because my – very few people spoke Russian, and there was not much talking with them. And as far as me as a child is concerned, I did play with chi – Russian children, you know. And there were two boys, and the father was in charge of some sort of a – like a lumberyard, I remember. So – but there was not much of a contact otherwise. No, and there was no – no – no – you e – I think that perhaps nobody was discussing anything with each other because everybody was afraid of everybody, you know. You could go –

Q: You – your own circle, that is you, Mrs. **Zhaglietski**(ph), and your daughter, yo – that didn't affect you. You were like a cell. You –

A: Correct.

Q: – you – you trusted one another.

A: Oh yes, yes.

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Q: You were like –

A: And all the po – yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Basically, all the Poles were like that, yes.

Q: Mm-hm. Except the grandma, who needed the egg.

A: Yes, yeah. I don't remember anyone – I then heard later on that there was somebody else, but I don't even know if it was in our – on our collective farm, that was like that. But there were people that were trying to save their own lives, and denouncing others.

Q: The winter of '41, you stayed inside, you said because it was so cold.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: When spring came, were you working again, helping **Marisha**(ph), or –

A: No. They some – they threw me off of that.

Q: Okay. Okay. Maybe you were eating too much of the pigs' food, you never know.

A: Probably. No, I hope they didn't know about.

Q: Okay. So in June '41, you do learn that **Germany** attacks the **Soviet Union**.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: But the other developments, you don't know about yet.

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A: No.

Q: The ones about the negotiations for Polish officers, and so – and how – how did that summer progress? What were you doing, and what was your mother doing during that summer? Was she still being interrogated?

A: All of us – all – yeah – I don't remember that that month she was or – you know, what month it's ended, or whatever – her interrogations or whatever they – you know. Really, intimidation and harassment, you know. But what – after that – that was announced that – it was announced that we have amnesty, that we can move freely through **Russia**. Well, now – now, think of it. You are in the middle of nowhere, and you are going to move freely in **Russia**. So all the Poles – again, I don't know how we found out all this, but somehow all the Poles tried to get out from collective farms, which was not easy. They didn't want to let us go, and of course they did – physically it was almost impossible. So I can't tell you though, how the news that the Polish government was sending emissaries, or representatives to try – trying to find us, I don't know how we got the news. But **Zhaglietskis**(ph), my mother, and some other family decided to get out of the **sovkhos** – called **sovkhos** house and go, move towards a city, and **Semipalatinsk** was the city.

Q: How do you say that again?

A: **Semipalatinsk**.

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Q: **Semipalatinsk.**

A: **Semipalatinsk.**

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, yeah, it's a – it's – was known when they started to sending **Sputniks** down.

Q: I see.

A: You know, it's **Kazakhstan** nearby. So, by whatever means again, bribery through – not – not so mu – mun – there was no money, but whatever you had, you know.

Q: To sell.

A: Yes. To exchange. So we somehow got out of **Peschanka** to a port on a river that's **Irtys** river, because I remember that, getting on a – some boat. And we then proceeded south, to **Semipalatinsk**, and I also remember that there were – I remember seeing it somehow, in that the German colonists that were before, really highly – in a way fr – relatively highly regarded, because they settled in communist country –

Q: So they have been German [**indecipherable**]

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A: – they were being deported because the Russians attacked from the west. So they were now taken o-off of their collective farms and thrown out. The Russian

**[indecipherable]**

Q: Because **Germany** was attacking.

A: Yes.

Q: Because Germans were attacking.

A: Yes. So they were taking over, yes.

Q: So – but these must have been German communists, or people who were –

A: Oh yes, absolutely, yes.

Q: They were people who ideologically were for the social system.

A: **[indecipherable]** Oh yes, yes.

Q: I see. Okay.

A: Mm-hm. So – so then a – aw – down the **Irtys** we somehow – I don't know what the – what means of transportation we took or may – because I don't think **Semipalatinsk** is on the **Irtys**. We landed in **Semipalatinsk**, where also **Zbishu**(ph) who was released from prison, because the amnesty was proclaimed for all, found himself there, and found a room with **Russia** – Russian couple, and it was the – so when we first arrived, I'll never forget, we went to see wh-where we were going to stand – and again, quite a few Poles living together, but it was in the city,

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and so on. But anyway, that – the landlady and her husband were eating potatoes just covered with butter, I – I – I almost fainted right there. Food was always on one's mind. But the – the landlady's husband was a chef at some cadet school, so he would steal from them. This is how they had lots of food, but they don't – didn't share it with us. Instead again, we stole from them, because the landlady had in – in her – like basement, da – un-under – dungeon-like area, really. She had like a tall – toasted dark bread. So we si – we would position guards to see if she was coming, and one would go down and steal.

Q: To be – everybody needed to eat.

A: Mm-hm. Right, yes.

Q: Okay. So **Zbigniew** had found a room in their place?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And then all five of you were in this room?

A: All five plus a – one more fellow whose mother died in **Peschanka**, and we buried her in the steppes, so there were six of us –

Q: Six people.

A: – six people. And **Semipalatinsk** then did get some – some representative of the Polish government, you know, they were sent all over **Russia** to be looking whose – who – who is there. Nobody knew what happened to the 15,000 Polish officers, you

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know, nobody knew. So, we then found out that there is a Polish army under the British – British are –

Q: Authorities?

A: Authority, correct.

Q: Okay.

A: For – being formed in the south, in – in **Uzbekistan**. So, since everybody wanted to get the heck out of **Russia**, you know, maybe we – we should be going south. So everybody from [**indecipherable**] to the north, everybody was trying to get south. And again, you had to bri – in the meantime, war is going on, as far as **Russia** is concerned. So –

Q: Can we interrupt just for a second?

A: Yes, sorry.

Q: When you say **Russia**, do you mean the **Soviet Union**?

A: Yes, I do, sorry, yeah.

Q: Because –

A: I know.

Q: – **Kazakhstan** is not part of **Russia**, nor is **Uzbekistan**, but they were all part of the **Soviet Union**.

A: Absolutely true, yes.



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Q: Okay, okay, just wanted to make sure –

A: **Norman Davis.**

Q: Yes.

A: Yes, he's absolutely right, yes, absolutely. **Soviet Union.**

Q: All right.

A: So we – we somehow – we started going south.

Q: Okay.

A: And it is 1941, already maybe fall.

Q: Okay.

A: And of course we – it takes a – days to get to where supposedly the Polish army is being formed. And I – again, you have to – the trains are slow, overloaded. You wait at stations, you wait at different stations, and lice is all over, all over.

Q: That's why they had delousing stations?

A: Uh-huh. You – you – you wait in the station, you s – you know, it's crowded, and so on. So li – you – you open that – you – you look –

Q: In your sleeves?

A: – a long – you have sleeves like that, and they are crawl – marching, you know, every – marching. But again, the Russians would say, oh, don't worry. When new

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people, cleaner people come to the station, the lice with leave you. And do you know that supposedly they did, I don't know.

Q: I want to ask something; when you were able to leave **Peschanka**, is that the place?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you issued any documents, or any permission, so that if anybody stopped you –

A: Yes, I believe, I believe so, but I – I wouldn't know it, you know.

Q: Okay. So you got some piece of paper that showed you are allowed to go?

A: Yes, I believe so.

Q: Okay.

A: But I would – I – I can't guarantee it, no.

Q: Okay.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So there you were at the stations, together with lice who also want to leave the **Soviet Union**, and you are trying to get south.

A: Yes. So we get south, and by then it's b – the – almost December.

Q: Okay.

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A: So we get south, and there is nothing but some tents and a few Polish men who escaped, or walked – and people walked thousands of miles. Sa – some people ca – some – in some families, mother and father were dead, and th-the eldest child would carry youngest one. So this – just tragic stories, you will hear them probably. Awful stories. But anyway – so, we arrive and there's nothing. And when we – but a few tents, and a few men that still don't have uniforms, nothing.

Q: So where was this place that you arrived to?

A: **Yangiyul**, it was called.

Q: **Yangiyul**.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Mm-hm, okay.

A: So – so, there is nothing. Nobody is –

Q: Waiting for you?

A: – doing anything. And we were not the only one doing this, but we never – I not – don't remember ever meeting anybody else in that place where there was nothing.

Q: Yeah.

A: So we then – this – deci – we decide to go back, because at least we know – to

**Semipalatinsk.**

Q: Okay.

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A: Because if you didn't go back, you would end up on another collective farm, worse than the one you were probably in, because that is **Uzbekistan**, you know, there's not really, I don't know, sheep.

Q: Okay.

A: And again, later on I find out that many people just disappeared, because they – they stayed on another collective farm, and that was the end of them, you know. It's just – just not ba –

Q: So they were forgotten, they were never registered, never –

A: Yeah, right, right.

Q: Okay.

A: So we go – we start going back, which was worse than coming – going south.

Q: Yeah.

A: Winter is – is – it is – is there, cold. So when we arrived in **Semipalatinsk**, I didn't have any shoes on, and of course, cold, and I – I – my feet were frostbitten, and they don't bother me now, but they bothered me **England**, because we came from warm climate to ba – anyway, so there we arrive, and the – the room was still there, because maybe one of the guys still was there, I don't remember now.

Q: Okay.

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A: So we go, and we then – there is a representative of the Polish government in the – established in **Semipalatinsk**. And material help comes from U.S. and **Great Britain**, for example, shoes and so on. And again – but it all takes time. So we then start back to go south in – in the summer.

Q: So you stayed the whole winter in **Semipal-palatinsk**?

A: Yes.

Q: [**phone ringing**] Can I cut please? [**break**] So, you stayed the winter in **Semipalatinsk**?

A: Yes.

Q: And you lived in this one room?

A: Yes.

Q: And you got some sort of material help from the Polish authorities, that was sent through Americans and British?

A: Correct, yes.

Q: And then, you're there for several months, and in the summer you start to go south again.

A: Correct. Yes.

Q: And – why?

A: Why? In order to escape.

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Q: So –

A: And by now we know that there is – that there – there are -- **Zbishu**(ph), the – the **Zhaglietski**'s(ph) son, already joined the – I think he was, later on he was in the air force, but he went south before us.

Q: I see.

A: But of course, there's no communication, it's just tha – with this representative here, that – tha-that – so we – we start going south again. And –

Q: This is now summer of '42?

A: Correct. It's now easier, because it's summer. But I do remember by then, trains filled with wounded Russian soldiers being transported. I mean, on – not even under cover. There were many wounded. I'm sure they went the – ended up in gulag later on. But anyway – but a – so we – when we then arrive in **Yangiyul** –

Q: Again, the same place.

A: Correct. There is – oh, there are tents and there are many Polish civilians there, but – and the Polish soldiers, th-their rations came from the British army. So they shared the food with us, because **Stalin** didn't want to give any food to us at all. So they shared the food, and prior to our arrival, there were already two – two transports out of **Russia**, over the **Caspian Sea** to **Teheran**. So we then end up really closing the camp, and whatever civilians are there – and again, you know,

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when you arrived in the south, and you started to eat a little bit better, everybody was getting si – ty-typhoid, dysentery. Lack of vitamins, you know, I was covered with something, I don't remember what it's called.

Q: Sores, or –

A: Sores, yeah.

Q: Yeah, some sores.

A: Oh – yeah. Lack of vitamins, I wa –

Q: So were you able – I mean, were – were you able to leave because your father was a military officer?

A: No, it – it's just that we were able to li – leave because we were lucky.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: Really.

Q: So it wa – it – his – that he was in the military had nothing to do with it.

A: No, nothing whatsoever, no, no.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, the worst really was for the so-called minorities, because from day one, Jews were considered to be citizens of – of **Russia**. They – Russians were their saviors. So it was very difficult at times to – for a Jew – Polish Jew –

Q: Yeah.

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A: – to emi – to go – get out of ru – **Soviet Union**, I'm sorry, with us, you know.

Q: So because – okay, because they weren't considered Polish citizens.

A: Correct. They – they were deported to be saved by the Russians. Well, anyway, so then, after everything was being liquidated, the last – last group of the soldiers, and of – very many were very sick, you know, as I say. Well, once you start eating, and you were starved so many years. So we then, from yangilu – **Yangiyul**, go to something called **Krasnovodsk**, which was on the coast – port on the **Caspian Sea**.

And on – with the last transport from **Russia**, we escape. Again, you have to leave everything on the ground. By then it's very hot, and we are from very cold north.

No shoes, so now the feet are absolutely suffering because it's so hot. But anyway, to the very end, we are not sure that we'll get on that ship. The ship was overloaded, everybody was sick on the ship, and we crossed the **Caspian Sea** to what used to be called **Pahlavi**, for the shah of **Pahlavi**, now it's a different name, because –

Q: Okay, I want to interrupt right here. You mentioned before that for minorities; and you gave us an example; Jews who were from **Poland** who were deported, had difficulties leaving. Did you know, or did you see any Jewish people who were in your wagon, or in the – or in **Peschanka**, I think it was that you –

A: Yeah.

Q: We – did you know of – of such families, or such individuals who would –



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A: I only knew of one. I wouldn't recognize a Jew from non-Jew, I'm sorry.

Q: Okay.

A: But I knew of one Jewish person, and she was with us almost throughout this – this experience. She was a – a wife of a Polish major.

Q: Okay.

A: And she had two sons. And they – of course, again, she – she was left with us, I don't know where she was in pa – **Semipalatinsk**, I – maybe she even lived with them, I don't remember. But anyway, sh-she – but she, perhaps because she was married to a Polish military man, it was easier for her. And no, she didn't regard herself maybe as – as a Jew.

Q: Do you remember her name?

A: Yes, **Maria Kuska**(ph).

Q: **Maria Kuska**(ph).

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And her two sons had been deported with her?

A: Yes. Yeah.

Q: And they had gone to the same pig farm?

A: No, a – I don't – I don't remember them from the pig farm.

Q: Okay, you remember them in **Semipalatinsk**.

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A: Correct.

Q: Okay.

A: And then they were very nice to me, because they – they – then tha – joined the Polish army, so we reconnected with everybody in **Teheran**, and of course they – I was small, and ti –

Q: And everybody liked you.

A: – so they – yeah.

Q: Everybody liked you, yeah.

A: They took me for – for ice cream, and they were already in the army, so they had money, you know.

Q: So – okay, so let's go back to the ship. You say it was overcrowded?

A: Oh yes. That was a nightmare, really. So, we are on the ship, and I don't know how long it took to cross to **Pahlavi**. We cross in **Pahlavi** and we are just down t – on the beach.

Q: Shore, mm-hm.

A: And there is trans – transit ca-camp, really, in **Pahlavi**, because I – all the transport were coming. Not all. I – I should – I should not say it because some people went o-ov-over land, to **Isfahan**, which is another – I think **Adamchik(ph)** went that way, but I wouldn't bet. Yeah, I think **Adamchik(ph)** went that way. But

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anyway, so we just are dumped in that transit camp, and dysentery is everywhere. I – and there are – there is nothing but sort of walls made of like reeds, or whatever. We were not there too long, and then we were put – maybe because we were almost the last coming out of the –

Q: Do you remember – did you leave in which month in the summer of '42?

A: I think it was August, but I wouldn't bet on it.

Q: Okay.

A: I can go to my diary. No, I am joking.

Q: It's okay.

A: So –

Q: Oh, and excuse me, you had said you had to leave everything behind, but you had your little suitcase.

A: Absolutely.

Q: So you could take your suitcase with you.

A: I definitely carried it all. I – don't ask me how. I have it still.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: Is na – wasn't probably nothing in it. But you know, rings, and all that – if any – but, of course, nothing was by then left. But if you ha – even had a pillow, you had to le-leave it on there.

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Q: Okay. And the reason for that?

A: I think one of the reasons [**indecipherable**] thinking now, was that in order to – to fit the – all the people that were trying to be on that ship, you had – y-y-you could not – y – th-the less you took, the more people –

Q: Could go.

A: – could go.

Q: I see. I see. Okay. So, you're in **Pahlavi**, and then from there what happens?

A: On buses we are take – we are – we drive through the Iranian mountains, very steep precipices, you know, one or two buses fell down.

Q: Really?

A: Really, yeah, really. A-And very na – well, you know, when they – in the mountains it's very dangerous, you know, it – to be on the mountain. But anyway, so we arrive in **Teheran**, and we are put in camp number one, which has nothing, you know, just a piece of land, very dry, hot. And there is – was a building which was a hospital, because many people right away – a very primitive hospital, but a building. So, we are in camp number one, and I don't know, there were about three or four camps. And –

Q: So you were on the outskirts of **Teheran**?

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A: Oh yes, yes, yes, no, not **Teheran** itself, no. And there are many other camps around **Teheran**, mainly of military camps. Indian – the **Sikhs**, the **Gurkhas**, I mean al-all – almost every country was re – military was presented militarily around there. But th-this was a refugee camp. So there – there’s nothing at first, and slowly they build again, like a platform where we just sit and I – the w – the – they then give us – they carry food in pails to us, you know, and it’s all – usually it was something with rice, you know. But oh – I all – we always have this food on mind. When I look –

Q: You’re still hungry. At that point you’re still hungry.

A: Well, we all – yeah, I mean, food was some sort of an obsession. I – I mean, the fact that maybe one had food, one wanted more, I don’t know. But anyways –

Q: Hunger.

A: Yeah.

Q: Hunger.

A: Yeah.

Q: Would do it.

A: That’s right. So – a-and of course, schools are already set – Poli – Polish government in exile again, I mean, I don’t know how they did it, but they set up schools right there. I was two years behind, so they – I have to study faster, but we

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sit on – literally on the ground, studying. We have teachers, we don't have any books, but we – we slowly start schooling again.

Q: Did you write between the line now?

A: Yes. No, there were no lines.

Q: There were no lines any more.

A: None, no, no. But I wrote in my diary.

Q: So you started writing a diary?

A: Oh yes, I started writing the diary in the camp.

Q: And you were how year – how many years old there?

A: Ten.

Q: You were 10 years old?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Did you have the idea by yourself, or did somebody suggest it to you?

A: Nobody suggested it to me.

Q: What are the things that you wrote in that diary? Do you remember?

A: Today I – I am – I am very mad, because they not only looked for lice at – when I was at school, but when I came to my barracks. That was what. And today was a great dinner, because we ate so much. And then I wrote about the people that w – that we lived with on this platform first, and then they build barracks. So – but the

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worst part for me, and for many children, because we – there was something called Egyptian eye infection.

Q: Okay.

A: Oh, the headache was splitting, the eyes were puffed up, filled with –

Q: Mucus?

A: – pus, yeah.

Q: Pus, mm-hm.

A: And you couldn't open them, and then they would, of course, try to – to finish that infection and they would line us up outside in this heat, dry heat, and with the sand or soil just in – in the air, and you stood there, and they would give you, you know, drops into the eyes. It was – it was excruciating. And one time, we still were on these plat – there was no cover, of any sort. And the toilet facilities were something else. No, ju-just a hole, a huge, long hole dug in the ground, with planks put over it, you know. Nothing else. And one night, you know, I – I endlessly probably cried, because you couldn't open eyes, so my mother takes me to that – I need to go, she takes me there, and I fell inside. It was horrible. Because you – you don't have any facilities to wash yourself.

Q: Oh yeah, yeah.

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A: She – I don't know how she – but it – well, it – it was cured, you know, but it was one of the horrific pains. But anyway – so, the school started in that camp, you know, and we slow – slowly started.

Q: How was your mother's health, now that she was in a –

A: Well, she again was – she again was hospitalized in that building, I remember, that was the only building, because she had heart problems, no question.

Q: Mm-hm. And in this camp, were you able to inquire about your father and where he might be?

A: No, not yet.

Q: Okay.

A: It wa – came later.

Q: So you didn't know if he was dead or alive?

A: No, we didn't know where he was.

Q: Okay. How long did you stay there?

A: In that camp? Let me see. I would say, no – not very long, about maybe six months. Because Mother then got a position at this Polish military headquarters where she went around the camps, doling out money to the wives of officers. And –

Q: Like she was. She was a wife of an officer.

A: Yes, yes, yeah.



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Q: Okay. So this would have been, let's say, in the winter of '43, if you were there for –

A: Correct, yeah.

Q: Yeah, about half a year, so winter, spring, '43.

A: Correct, right. So we moved, since Mother gets the job, and so did **Marisha**(ph). We moved to – on – in – in a room in a home of a Persian – it – Iranians.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: The home – the home is on – and there are just a few homes, and in the middle there is a little pool. It-It's like a inya –

Q: Courtyard?

A: Courtyard, yeah. That – that was –

Q: Sounds pretty.

A: – usually [**indecipherable**]. Very pretty, but it was very small. Oh yes, very pretty, but – so, we move there, and –

Q: This is still **Teheran**?

A: Yes, **Teheran**. And the la-landlady lost her husband, we are told, because a Polish Jewish lady sto-stole him from – but, she had the brother who – who was – they were Muslims. He was an extremist. On – on the holiday of **Ramadan**, he would go and beat himself with chains and so on. But, she had a cat, which I liked.

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Q: [sneeze] Excuse me. Okay, she had a cat that you liked?

A: Yes. And I have a – even a picture of that cat. And she had a daughter, whose name was **Azar(ph)**.

Q: **Azar(ph)**.

A: And **Azar(ph)** and I became friends, because we were almost the same age. And **Azar(ph)** and I would go to the bazaar, and I learned Farsi. I did speak Farsi, and I know how to write my name in Farsi.

Q: Oh, oh wow.

A: Which I did. So, from time to time then, in my diary I write, today, mean Iranian girls pulled my hair and so on. But overall, **Azar(ph)** was very good, and **Azar(ph)** wrote in my memory book, or whatever it's called, in Farsi. I tried to have it translated. It was translated once correctly, and then **Adamchik(ph)** lost it.

Q: Oh, the translation?

A: Yes.

Q: Oh.

A: Because he wanted to see it. But so, it's something in there, since you know, flowers fade, but words stay, and maybe a hundred years from now they'll still live. Something like that.

Q: That's a lovely thought.

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A: Very lovely, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: So – and so, when we lived in **Teheran**, there were schools in **Teheran**, Polish schools in **Teheran**.

Q: Did miss – Did Mrs. **Zhaglietska**(ph) come with you, or were they –

A: Yes, yes.

Q: – they were with you too.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay.

A: So, in **Teheran**, the – the Polish school I – I had to go – I went to Polish school in the city itself. The school was near some huge palace, and park, where at one time, **Churchill**, **Roosevelt** and **Stalin** met. [indecipherable]

Q: That's right.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. And of – they were – we were – we would go by while they were there.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Yes. But we off – never saw.

Q: You would –

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A: No.

Q: But did you see lots of different kinds of officials and vehicles, and things like that?

A: No, you know, because it was very deep inside some gar – this [indecipherable]. No, but we knew it was there.

Q: Okay. And you knew they were there.

A: Yes. So, in **Teheran**, **Marisha**(ph) loved to go to the movies, so we – **Marisha**(ph) and I would go to American movies, where American edwa – soldiers would look and offer us once gum, and we didn't know what tha – to do with chewing gum. And in **Teheran**, the ice cream, the Iranian ice cream, I think it was maybe – wasn't it invented, sorbet and ice cr – invented? Excellent ice cream, so we ate that. And of course, again we were fixated on food. So it was – and we didn't have that much money. So I remember, you know, in this street, **Lazar**(ph), there was some club or something, where the American soldiers were going boogie-woogie. Really. And then they would come out, which was even worse for me, they would have this white bun with lots of ham in it. And I said to myself, if I could only have half of it.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

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A: That – the – **Teheran** was overrun with every kind of, you know, mili – because shah was – people were – even Russians were there, which is military Russians.

And there was the German spy, fifth column sp fi – fi-fifth – I mean, German spies were there too. Everybody was in **Teheran**. **Teheran** was a beautiful city, really.

Q: What exotic things you saw.

A: You're right.

Q: And in such a short period of time.

A: So I come here, I go to **Illinois Institute of Technology**, you know, for the first time, which is another long story. But I go there, and I take English 101, and I compared **Teheran** with **Chicago**, and the guy almost falls off the chair.

Q: Yeah. And you ex – you start speaking in English about what you've seen.

A: Well, I will tell you, my spoken English was horrible. I knew how to write well, but I did not –

Q: You took time –

A: Because when you don't use the language, you know.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: Oh yeah, but we started studying English already in **Teheran**.

Q: Okay.

A: I am, you are, she, it – it – he, she, it is, you know.

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Q: All of this. So, how long did this last, this employment for your mother and living in that small house with the courtyard?

A: Oh – mm-hm. Until about '44.

Q: So about a year?

A: Yes.

Q: About a year, okay.

A: Mm-hm. And then, of course, the headquarters in – in **Teheran** closed, and camp – Polish refugee camps are sort of th – th-this is a ho – ho – a very ho – great burden on **Iran**, really. The shah was very nice, but – for – to us –

Q: Yes.

A: – maybe not to his people. So then we – when the headquarters close, and the – all the Polish army goes fighting in **Italy** and **Libya** and **Egypt**, we are – we move – I don't know how we, but I think again, people were moved to different British colonies in the a – in **Africa**, **Kenya**, what's now **Tanzania**. **India**. **Mexico** accepted some orphans. **United States** didn't want to accept anybody. But anyway, the Brits distributed us through the colonies, and I don't know why we landed not in a colony, but in what's now **Palestine** – **Israel**, because it was their buffer state. So we – in a convoy of these dodgers, they were these huge trucks, we traveled through **Iraq** and **Jordan** to **Jerusalem**.

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Q: Did you know where your father was by now?

A: No.

Q: Still no.

A: Until **Lebanon**. Later on.

Q: Okay. So you traveled to **Palestine**.

A: Yes. So we g – we – we – in **Jerusalem** then, again, because of the Polish government, there is some – we do got some money. There are Polish military schools, but I am too small for those. There is a Polish girls' boarding school in **Ein Karem**, which is near na – **Jerusalem**. So I – we – Mother, **Marisha**(ph) and **Zhagliets**(ph) – **Pana**(ph) **Zhaglietska**(ph) and I land in **Ein Karem**, and are Polish people there, quite a few of them. So I go to school there, and again have to catch up two more years, so which I do through summers and so on. And this was bliss.

Q: So what was your mother doing?

A: Nothing really. Nothing.

Q: So her job ended in the –

A: Absolutely, mm-hm.

Q: And your – and how were you supported?

A: By this little si – do-doling out of money from the Polish government in exile.

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Q: So you would get support for the –

A: Military or not, I'll get support like that, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And the – no electricity, no running water, but the in – **Ein Karem** is known for the – is a place where Saint **John** was born. And my Arabic landlady had a huge, huge vineyards, and fig orchards, and olive orchards. And they had the olive press, and you know, I am talking as you – oh, terrific, but yeah, but no electricity, no running water. We would then go for water to Saint **Mary's** spring with – there is a legend or belief that when Saint **Mary** vi – is – Saint **Mary** visited Saint **E-E-Elizabeth**, the spring sprung, you know, ages ago. Pristine, beautiful water, and you know, I learn how to carry my water on the head, too, I'm – and it – I love really riding through the olive groves on dine – donkeys, and so on, and my landlady had two young daughters – three daughters, one was married. And the married one had a little boy whose name was **Juju(ph)**. And **Juju(ph)** would come always to us, and by the way, we could buy bread from really Jewish stores in Jerusalem, but it was delivered to – to – of course, no – no pig meat [**indecipherable**]

Q: No pork. No pork.

A: Chicken and chicken, I hate chicken to this day.

Q: Really? Too much chicken.



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A: Oh yes. But – well, it was not too much maybe, but I – I – you know, ev-every – once a week we had chicken. But fruit, the oranges were outstanding, you know, we – we really came back to life. So we were there –

Q: Were you – was this the place where you finally had good food?

A: Yes. Oh yes, really good food, yes.

Q: And did that mean that you stopped thinking about it so much, or not?

A: Well, I have to – I have to go to my diary. I d – I don't think I – no, I did not think as much, no. Now I have real girlfriends, we like to go and the – the – you know, it's mountainous.

Q: Yeah.

A: So on – on the slopes of the mountain there were like stairs, where the Arabs planted different crops. So we would go and jump, who is jumping higher or lower. I jo – joined the Girl Scouts. We went f – the flowers grew wild, th-they are called cyclamens, I still have them on the windowsill, I just love those flowers. We would pick those flowers, we were very happy. And we studied, and we went to

**Jerusalem**, and of course the sc – in – in the school we – we would stage different

–

Q: Plays?

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A: – plays and so on, and I was in the play, you know, things like that. So it was – that probably was the – now, the best parts of anywhere.

Q: How long did it last?

A: It lasted – you know, the war ended in '45.

Q: And as – where were you when the war ended?

A: Right there.

Q: Right there.

A: And my –

Q: Do you remember the day that it ended?

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: Tell me about that.

A: Well, the news came. I – I remember the feeling, you know. The war ended for all, but not for us, we can't go back to **Poland**. That kind.

Q: That kind of feeling.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Was the j – j -- **Zhaglietski**(ph) family still with you?

A: Well, the **Zhaglietski**(ph) family are still with us, but in the meantime, we find out that my father was in the – the – as prisoner of war, and somehow landed in the pri – as a prisoner of war with the **Zhaglietski**(ph). You know, his friend.

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Q: He had been captured in **Romania**?

A: He was interned in **Romania** and then really given up to the Germans.

Q: The Germans.

A: Mm-hm. When **Romania** became real friend. Of course, they – I think they had – **Romania** had oil i-i-in – at one – in one – in their industrial area. But anyway, so – what was I saying?

Q: You – the **Zhaglietski**(ph) was interned with your father.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: So, we find – we threw – we found my father, and he found us, through the Red Cross.

Q: Okay.

A: He tried then to – he wa – so after he was – they were liberated by the Americans, on Easter, they were – before they were liberated, they – they – the owa – my father was in a – in a prisoner of wa-war ca-camp near **Stuttgart**, which was an industrial city. The Germans started to shove them east. They ha – were marching, and in one place, bomb falling, and there they were – they were doing something behind some barn, he told me, and all of a sudden the Americans arrived.

Q: So, during this march, he's liberated by the American forces?

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A: Yes, mm-hm.

Q: Okay.

A: So when bo – th-the older officers that were – or military men that were liberated were then, of course, given the uniforms of the Polish army again, as part of the Eighth arm – British army. And when he started looking for us, the war ends, and my father, since he knew German well, he – there were displaced persons camps, so he was – made the – the Romanian nationalities, he wa – he – he was the le-leader or director of the Polish group. Many problems to de – when he was talking about it, he was most proud because he married off women with children that were who knows where – from where, he married them off, 50 of them off to men.

Q: Really? So – so th –

A: [**indecipherable**] matching men – Polish men with the Polish women. I met some of them here in – yeah, in – in **Chicago**.

Q: Was he a good matchmaker?

A: Yeah, because yes, then – it lasted, yes. I'm sure he was not the only one, the priest was involved, you know. But any – th-this is rather strange, because the British then were accepting the Polish military man that the – and allowing them to emigrate from the camps to **Great Britain**.

Q: From **Germany**.

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A: From **Germany**, and e – if the military man had the family, they were allowing the family to come along. My father supposedly got on the train to **Great Britain** – you know, they were – of course, not directly, and he then, at the last minute, while **Zhaglietski**(ph) went to **England**, he got off the train. So there are many suppositions why he did. So – but anyway –

Q: What are these suppositions?

A: I – I – I don't know, I – I fi – one is, and that may be true, because my father was very sort of socially minded that he didn't want to abandon the people, or he had some – some woman, I don't know. One of the two, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: In the meantime, I was just waiting for the ideal father, and in **Ein Karem**, many of my friends whose father appeared, you know, and I was endlessly waiting, but no-nothing happened, o – you, obviously in **Ein Karem**. But then we find each other, and Father tries to give letters to us, to the e – the Jews that were in the camps, and were going to **Israel**, you know, **Palestine**.

Q: Oh, so he's still –

A: But none arrived, none arrived.

Q: Okay.

A: No letter arrived, but –

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Q: No letter – le –

A: Yeah, I –

Q: So he – he finds out that you were there.

A: Yes.

Q: You were there in **Jerusalem**.

A: And we find out – yes.

Q: And that's through the Red Cross?

A: Yes. **Geneva**, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: So then – okay, so the war ends, and since **Zhaglietski**(ph), the – the man o – head man of the family is in **England**, **Marisha**(ph) and **Pani**(ph) **Zhaglietska**(ph) are allowed to go to **England**. Many people go to **England**, we are left behind. We are left behind, and the Polish communist government tries desperately to ta – to – to really pressure us – and also the Brits too, everybody was pressuring us, go back to **Poland**. My mother just couldn't even think of it, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: She still, even later on, she would very often look behind her if anybody was listening, you know, just – just a habit.

Q: Yeah.

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A: But anyway, so we – we remain, and the few families without fathers and so on, the s – the war, or civil war between the Jews and the Arabs starts, and we're in an Arab settlement, and there are prob – you know, Arabs go on our roof, because there's flat roofs, and just –

Q: Shooting.

A: – shoot, shoot, shoot, you know. And in – sometimes at night – the village surrounded, really, by Jewish settlements. In the meantime, the British let criminals out of the prisons, and there comes a Muslim – in that village, I must say, there are two so-called muftis, one – or leaders, one is Muslim, and one is Christian in this village where – **Ei-Ein Karem**. It's on – I remember it well, because it was –

Q: This is wa –

A: – first day be – yes?

Q: What year?

A: This is now '46. This – this is Thursday before Easter, and was beautiful night, moon shining and all of that, so I – I went to church, and the Christian mufti was there, and washing his feet. And we are sitting – I mean, consider is no electricity, so sit and enjoys – well, enjoys life maybe better because of it. But anyway – and all of a sudden we hear a shot. This criminal, Muslim criminal that was let out of prison, killed the mu – Christian mufti. From then on there was chaos in the village,

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and again there was endlessly alarmed that the Jews are coming, when Jews aren't – were not coming. Very few Poles left. My bri – English teacher was still there. He was from – Polish American from **Pittsburgh**, I think. So he saw there was strength to negotiate for the whole group, there were maybe about 50 of us left, just women with children. And the school closed in '47, only half a year, you know, of schooling, because the war – this was going on, shoot – shootouts were going on. So, in **Ein Karem** also, there was a – a – it's like in a valley, there was a mountain on which there was – it was called **Moscow B**, where the Russian nuns resided since Tsarists time. They had their little houses, their little church. And of course they – th-the Muslim Arabs really, were accusing them of again giving signals to the Jews, you know, just too totally ridiculous. But anyway, we were used to go around the village, and nobody bothered us, but when we – we would now go, and one of us had eyeglasses, these Muslim are – I don't know where they even came from, but anyway, they – they would – right away would ask us if we are Jews. **Yehudi, Yehudi?** Beacu – and there were guns, you know. Because you had eyeglasses, you know, things like that. But anyway, so we were pressured to – to – to be repatriated to **Poland**, Mother then stopped us, really insisted that we cannot do it, so about 50 of us, women with children, through this – in a red – Red Cross – really with Red Cross signs, go, during the shootouts from – we are driven to



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**Lebanon**, where there are still schools, or maybe one left. Were tall like that one you see.

Q: I see.

A: So, again I had to catch up, because again I was half a year behind in schooling.

But then again, **Lebanon** is beautiful, beautiful. **Lebanon** –

Q: So, you were – at least there was no war going on between –

A: Absolutely, was beautiful and quiet, the **Mediterranean Sea**, all that. So, we were in **Lebanon**, and –

Q: And where's – your father at this time was still –

A: **Germany**.

Q: Okay.

A: **Germany**. Very few really communications, because you know, mail was not re – exactly going through.

Q: Okay.

A: So, in **Lebanon** I went to – I finished equivalent to high school, you know, I graduated. And again, there were very few of us left there, so **Great Britain** accepted us. But –

Q: So this is without your father, but just because of your own status?

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A: Yeah, well, they didn't know where to take us. We were in **Lebanon** then, not – I shouldn't say we, but Mother was pressured to emigrate to **Australia** because **Australia** was filled with men, but no women. And final – and my mother, we knew in that, then we would never be reunited with my father because **Australia** was not accepting men that were over 50, my father was 51. So – but anyway, she also told them that I can be a housemaid anywhere, not only austr – but that was, you know, it was tough again on her.

Q: Yeah.

A: Horribly. But again, I'm going to emphasize that the teachers that were teaching us, and our mothers, you know, especially our – men too, of course, but mostly I was surrounded by females, it just – I – th-they were just amazing. There were professors from a university even in **Wilno** that were teaching us, you know. So, we go to **England** on a ship, in 40 – oh no, now it's '49, '49.

Q: Wow. That's quite late.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: That's four years after the wirl – war ends.

A: Oh yes, yes. And in **England**, we end in – there are so-called hostels, where the families of – well, after the war, as I say, **Great Britain** accepted –

Q: Right.

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A: – the military that was not returning to **Poland**, and there were hostels where we live in **Quonset** huts, you know. And it –

Q: What's a **Quonset** hut?

A: Oh, it is a – a building that was built for – during the second World War. It's sort of made of tin, the semi-circle –

Q: Circular.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: A tin –

A: Mm-hm. And we are in – in a camp in – near – where – oh, it was named **[indecipherable] Bosworth(ph)**. Usually these camps were – were the flyers, especially American flyers used to live, and then they were give – just left there, so we occupied them. So after a while, I want to continue, because in **Europe** we not only have the high school, but we have two more years **lytseum(ph)** – lyceum. So – and of course, by then you had to also have some British certificate that you did something in schools.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, I am accepted to something called **Stowell Park** Polish girls' school, and it is in **Quonset** huts, where the American shell-shocked – and that is far away from our camp, but you know, you go by bus, and –

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Q: Where American shell-shocked soldiers were?

A: Yes, pa – during the war, when – when they were, you know –

Q: Okay, so the school is in such a place?

A: Yes. Now it's come back –

Q: But the soldiers were gone?

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Beautiful setting on some estate, of some lord, you know, but it's there. So I was there for about – everything is rationed, and I don't have – I just have sandals, and the winter comes. And this is when my frozen-bitten f-feet start hurting very much, almost like wounds, you know. So I ask my father to send me – because by then we are in contact, send me something from **Germany**, and he just didn't unders –

Q: So he doesn't come to **Britain** when he finds out you're there?

A: No, no, no. He doesn't, and he – there are letters that I now see exchanged, and it – it was really moth – my mother wanted him to come, and we wanted to stay in **Britain**, because we knew almost – you know, we went through **Russia** with ma – **Soviet Union** with many people. But –

Q: Oh, so there were many people from the **Soviet Union** who had been deported, who were in **Britain**, and so you had –

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A: Oh, yes, yeah.

Q: – you had a circle of people.

A: Absolu – yes, absolutely true.

Q: Okay.

A: So, in **Stowell Park**, there were three girls from **Lebanon**, that I knew in **Lebanon**. One of them now lives in **Sherwood**. So, we sort of kept together. In the meantime, my mother was corresponding to – with my father, and he then wrote, you know, that we – he has a sponsor in the **U.S.** So the sponsor in **U.S.** then – a sponsor meant that you have to guarantee somebody's place to live in and work. You had to have guaranteed position where you worked, in factory, of course, but you had – so we then, Mother and I, I was in – in that school for one year, in '51 by now, I think, '50 – '50, '51.

Q: Well, when did you – what year did you go to **Britain**, 1949?

A: Forty-nine. So yeah, '50 - '51. So then Mother and I go to join my father in **Germany**, and after 12 years it was really – I mean, I can't say it's a shock, but it was like meeting a stranger, you know, there was this small station in **Wentorf**, was the name of the town, German town. We get off the bus, and there is this man, we don't know what to do with him, you know.

Q: Yeah.

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A: So, but anyway, you know, it – after 12 years it's tough for anybody to get anywhere together, but – but we did. It worked out, to a point. But anyway, so then, we – we are in a transit camp in –

Q: Together.

A: – **Wentorf**, and of course, you have to go through numerous interrogations again. Not only interroga – physical examinations, everything. It took a month, or a month and a half, you know, and the – you do help in the camp, which is fine. And I – the – finally we are put in front of the American representative, I think equivalent to a consul – you know, coun – someone from the American consulate, on the grounds of the camp. And finally he said yes, but it's still not certain that U.S. wants to accept us because my mother has a heart problem, so how are we going to support ourselves? So, we said, well, we both will work mad – I and – and my father. So finally it – we are accepted, and we then leave our – our – how many months later we left, I don't know, about two, three months, through all this. And we leave from **Bremenhaven**(ph).

Q: **Bremerhaven**.

A: Right. On a ship called the General **Macrae**(ph) with other refugees from other countries too; **Latvia**, you know, and **Estonia** even – **Lithuania** I didn't, but **Latvia** I remember, a very nice couple. So then we – it's October, the seas were rough, but

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we somehow made it, and we arrive in **New York**, and we very quickly then, within hours, get on a train, and arrive in **Chicago, Dearborn** station, which nonexistent. They preserve the building, but that's – I think it's like a shopping mall there. But – so we then stay with our sponsors and literally the next day, Father goes to work at **Cherriads'**(ph) lumber company, although he doesn't know how to be a carpenter, or whatever it's on – and I go to to work for **Butler's** Specialty company, where there is the mean owner, not – I – I mean, he – he – he thought I was scum, but he also was very mean, I remember, because he was – I was not used for – to people who were really disrespectful to elders. And this guy, I find out, is – is just awful to his uncle who is an old Jew – these were Jewish people – I mean, he was awful. But anyway, so I work there, and in the meantime, the my – the director of our school in **England** keeps writing, continue studying, because I studied quite well, you know. So I am – I try to look, but you are lost, you are the only one, you know. I work in this factory, on an assembly line, and I – as I am closing the boxes, I am reciting Polish poetry. But I met very nice Mexican girl there, but the Polish ladies were saying, why do you want to study, you know, it's the – you know, just keep working, you know. So I was sort of a black sheep, because I wanted to study. So I start – this Polish director from the Polish school, Dr. **Falinski**(ph) sends me to some priest, who wants to put me in the high school, and I don't need to go to the

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high school any more. And then he also tells me well, there is a mission in **Africa**, maybe you like **[indecipherable]**. No. So then wa – sends to another Polish organization which they tell me, why don't you learn to type. That's it, you know. And I said – I said to myself, well, I can learn how to type at home **[indecipherable]**. But anyway, so we stay for a short time already, with the sponsors. I work at **Butler's** Specialty company. And then we find a room. Again, it's all very near to the **U.S. Steel Corporation**, you know, where many Poles lived, and there was a Polish kind of a community there, on the south side, which is unlike, you know, the Polish **[indecipherable]**. So, the landlady's name is **Piney(ph) Biernatska(ph)**, and she's just a – she le-learned how to write and read by herself. Her husband died very early because he worked in the steel mills. The air was polluted like heck there, you know, because of dust, in that time, you know. It's amazing what happened since. So then I se – I – **Tolek(ph)** –

Q: Your friend from **Lebanon**.

A: **Lebanon**, and a guy with whom I was in the same classroom, start writing to me – they were in **Baltimore** somewhere – and saying well, you know, you have to – you should apply directly to a university because you know, they were at **Johns Hopkins** already, and they accept our matriculation, which was a surprise because it was – but anyway, so okay, okay, so I'm sitting, working at the factory, then I get a



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better job. I get a job in the slaughterhouses in **Wilson** and company, meat company, on the sou – on the way away from us, I have to go hours before I get there. I am a messenger there, okay. So, the smell is horrible there. I – I had to take two buses and a tramway to get there, so it took hours. But anyway, I come back, and again – I one time, because we shared the bathroom with our landlady, and landlady had two si – by then one married son, and two unmarried ones, and one still lived with her. And I'm in that bathroom, I am sorry to tell you, and I am looking into the wastepaper basket, and I find a – a bulletin from **Illinois Institute of Technology**. And I don't know any better, but I look and I say, this is near. Because my zip is 17, and **IIT** is 16. It wasn't near. In the meantime, **Tolek(ph)**, he says well, try it. We, of course, don't have the telephone. I use somebody else's telephone. And I then meet the dean of the evening school, it was called. And yes, he said, yeah. Oh, they know about po – our Polish schools in exile. And I started then – very soon I – I worked, but I then after work from **Wilson** and company went to the evening school at **IIT**. My 101 English was the first class. And then for five years I then went to evening school. After **Wilson** and company, I got a job at the savings and loan, **Calumet** Savings and Loan, where it's – savings and loans were still sort of an ethnic kind of –

Q: Right.

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A: – financial institution, so they needed someone with Polish and English; some people didn't speak. So I worked there while I went for five years to the evening school, and my mother, of course, worried every – every evening because – but I – this was – at this point I would never venture to do it, but, I mean, 11 o'clock I was standing with U.S. Steel workers waiting to another bus, and all was well, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: Not any more. So – so –

Q: And that's how you did it, that's how you –

A: And then – yeah, then I transferred to the day school, and I finished it in two years, th-the undergraduate, and then they gave me teaching fellowship – teaching si – assistantship there at **IIT**, so – and I got my Masters there.

Q: In what?

A: In business and economics.

Q: Okay. And –

A: And then they gave me – they – they gave me – **UFC** gave me a fellowship, and so I – I have one year towards my **PhD.**, but I – by then my mother died, and my father was losing his job, and I had to work and it was too much for me. I quit after a year.

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Q: Okay. A question that's a little bit delicate. In some ways, did you lose your father when he left for **Romania**, and – in 1939, and you didn't see him for 12 years?

A: I think so, yes, I think so. But it didn't stop me from sort of really wanting to find him, to have him. That's very true. He was a very bitter man towards the end, after we arrived here. Very bitter, very bitter.

Q: A different person than the one you knew?

A: Totally. Very bitter.

Q: That must have been hard.

A: Yes, very hard. That has been very hard, because I sort of idolized him, you know. Everybody was having fathers coming back, they were all ha-happy, you know when they saw fathers, and here it was, yeah.

Q: And also a disappointment for you mother for suffering so much.

A: Oh, that's exa – precisely. I think that that's what really was killing me, because it's only towards the end of her life, which was – my mother died at 54.

Q: Whoa. Young.

A: Yes, well –

Q: Very young.

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A: So it was only – she died in '56, so it was only five – four years. Towards the end they sort of were getting along better, I thought, you know. It was – nothing was – there were no quarrels, maybe it was better if there were, but th-there was a feeling that it just was not working.

Q: How sad.

A: Mm-hm, well –

Q: Well, I mean, so much had happened.

A: There is so m – mm-hm.

Q: So much had happened to both.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you had to hold so much in –

A: True.

Q: – throughout what you were going through.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: A tough price.

A: Well –

Q: A very tough price. Have you ever been back to jeli – the lovely village that – that you were deported from? The lovely town you were deported from? I forget the name.

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A: **Zaleszczyki**.

Q: **Zaleszczyki**.

A: No, that's now **Ukraine**. I went twice to **Poland**. Once in the 50s, after my mother died, and that was really emotional. That was still under communists – communism, and I-I took – I flew to **England**, and then **England** – there was an Anglo-Polish li – bus lines, because many Poles would go to **England** to shop, the ones that could. So I then arrived in **England**, and again, I sort of got reunited with **Marisha**(ph).

Q: Yeah.

A: By then she had three children, and I then want – took the bus – we crossed the channel, and in **Ostend** we took the bus through several – several countries, you know, th-the west – th-the western countries in **Europe** there. **Ho-Holland**, and so on. And we then – that was very interesting, because we stood a long time at the border between **East** and **West Germany**, and there were the Russian soldiers with their little red stars. And s – but then, after we crossed the border, going through **East Germany**, they would – they had stopped the bus once again, the East German soldiers, with machine guns, you know, how much money you have? And you went through **East Germany**, and really, this was a depressing view, again. Just depressing. So then, we arrive rather late on the border between **East Germany** and

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**Poland**, and these were everyb – those women, everybody that was there, you know, they ha – they bought lots – they said, oh no, they’ll stop us, and then look through all of this. They let us through, they didn’t look at anything. But this was really emotional again. Very emotional.

Q: Re – you know, the memory is coming back.

A: Yeah, very. Because all of a sudden you – you – you really saw – and the ba – I must say that compared to the East German soldiers, these Polish soldiers were so nice, you know. Elegant. And all of a sudden, there was a storm coming, and I – there were farmers, you know, in the – and they were speaking – I her – we heard them, you know, speaking Polish. They were doing something with str – you know, str – you know, st-straw –

Q: With hay?

A: With hay, hay, right, right. It was so –

Q: Those were – that’s what –

A: Yeah.

Q: – you remember from that first trip. Was it –

A: Correct.

Q: That’s right.

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A: Yes. And the second trip I – I made in the 70s, still communist. The first trip they even – th-th-they – you – you had to go and register. In **Poznań** I went to register. And the guy asked me so, why didn't I return to **Poland**? But I told him all right.

Q: You told him the truth.

A: Yeah, was very, very strange that nobod – but yeah, they would follow you on the streets at that time still. The second time when I went, I didn't feel that anybody was following me. I did register, but it was a nothing – 1970s, late 1970s. The second time I went because my – my one cousin I wa – th-the letters that were coming were rather strange, that he was jailed, and so on. That was my uncle's two sons, so it was again a very strange, because one was in the army, and obviously sold himself just to make his living [**indecipherable**]. And the other one, I – I don't know what was the matter, but he was in jail. So I thought of helping. We – we helped –

Q: You helped them.

A: – you know, the families, whether we knew them or not, you know.

Q: Okay. Just tell me very briefly, you yourself, you got married, yes?

A: Oh yes, yeah.

Q: Tell me, your husband was American, or s – or –

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A: American.

Q: American.

A: Ah, yes. After working at the savings and loan, and after getting my – what was it, my Masters, I start looking for a different job. They gave me some position at the savings and loan, but the owner's son was an idiot, excuse me, you know. You know, he – he would not tell me that the customers were coming in, you know, and I don't know what that was about. But anyway, so then I got a – I started looking for a job, and got a job at the **Harris** bank, which still exists [**indecipherable**] **Harris** bank. And again, I – I was very much surprised that the human resource person knew, oh yes, the – some doorman that had apartment went through – through experiencing the war, and he was happy now to be a doorman, which is true. We would – all wanted to be free. But I – so I start – they – I got the job as a commercial credit analyst. What we did – what I did, there were only three women in a department of 15, and one of them was my husband, he was also a commercial – except we women wouldn't be in any way considered to become commercial lending officers. We were there to look at the work o-of all these men, their analysis of a particular request for a commercial loan, and decide what was wrong, or what – so that's how I met my husband. The first time I met him, he's big, and I said oh,



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this guy looks like a true American bully – excuse me guys. But he very well read, and he – he’s ve – was very – knew about that – what went on in – in –

**Q: Europe?**

**A: – Europe**, and so on. So, we first went to a Polish movie, and – because he’s interested in movies. It was at **Roosevelt University**, and that’s how it all started.

**Q: Okay. And you have how many children?**

**A: Two.**

**Q: A boy and a girl?**

**A: Yes. Andrea** is 45, she’s a girl, and a boy, **Mark**, who is 42.

**Q: And one –**

**A: And one grandchild, nine.**

**Q: Okay.**

**A: And old man at nine.**

**Q: Oh my. Have they – have your children – were they interested in your story, in your experiences?**

**A: Yes, yeah. Ye – yes. When Andrea**, two, three years ago, got her Masters from the **Art Institute of Chicago** in writing, and she wro – she started in – anyway, she started a book, but it’s not only about me, but about her relationship with me.

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Q: Okay. But, at any rate, you talked about what you had gone through with your children?

A: Oh yes. Absolutely yes, yeah, mm-hm.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes, both of them, yeah.

Q: Okay. I would like to conclude the formal part of our interview –

A: Yes.

Q: – right now. Thank you very much for a – a truly, unbelievably descriptive, and very moving testimony today. It's very much appreciated, and I thank you for that.

This concludes the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview, with **Sabina Soltysiak Berggren**, on Ju – January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Thank you.

A: Thank you.

Q: Okay. **[break]** Great, I like that shot. All right, so Mrs. **Sabina**, please tell me what is it that you are holding here?

A: I am holding a little suitcase that was purchased in 1939 in **Vilnius**, and I have kept it ever since, through all the countries that were enumerated before, and here it is.

Q: So this is what you got the summer of '39, it was purchased then, and then when you were deported, it is what you took with you?

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A: Yes.

Q: Can you open it up?

A: See, I even wrote my last name here, in a horrible way.

Q: Can you focus on that? Let's see. Well, a child's handwriting. It's a child's handwriting, yeah. Very moving. Would you able to – you got it? Could you tilt it a little bit, so we could see the inside?

A: Higher, lower, no?

Q: Fine. You're fine. And you say you car – what did you carry in that suitcase?

A: Well, a few photographs that I somehow – I don't know why I put them there, but it – I – th-they are saved, and they are still somewhere. And I used the back of the photographs to – to draw something.

Q: Okay. Thank you. You can close it. And we'll take a f – a photo of the side, you know, maybe the front side of it, like –

A: This, or –

Q2: The top.

Q: The top.

A: Top, oh.

Q: Like that, yeah. Thank you. Okay. And then you have a diary, you say?

A: Yes.

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Q: This is – and this is the diary that you started when?

A: I started in nine – 1942.

Q: All right. So this is right when you leave – if you hold it up like this – yes, like that.

A: You see that – I have here my name in Farsi, or Arabic.

Q: Oh yeah. And then you have a date of 1942 on the –

A: Now, the date here, I put – I – frankly I cannot rely very well on the dates, because I see that I messed them up. When **Marisha(ph)** looked at it, she pointed out what was '43 was '42, and things like that. But here it says – let me see what it says here.

Q: I'm talking about the left hand side.

A: Left ha –

Q: The left hand side.

A: Oh, th-that – that is – has nothing to do with anything, yeah.

Q: Oh, okay, all right. So, could we get the cover of that as well? Even it's just a plain black cover. And could you turn to the first entry page? Is that dated?

A: Yes, but as I say, it's dated '43, but I think it's '42, I'm not sure.

Q: Okay, fine. If we could hold that up. We focus in on that. Thank you. Do I see some photographs down there?

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A: Yes. I just wanted you to sh – I wanted you to see the photograph of my first class in the camp number one, near **Teheran**.

Q: That's that. Okay, if you hold it up like this –

A: All right.

Q: – we'll be able to focus in on it. So hold it up against like that, yeah. And, are you in that photograph?

A: Yes. I'll – it's marked with an **X**, so right here.

Q: Uh-huh. Okay. Can we see the **X**? Do you see the **X**? No.

A: I put an **X** on me and my best friend.

Q: Oh, I see it, I see the **X**.

A: And the best friend is here.

Q: Okay. Do you see it now, the **X**, sort of?

Q2: A little bit.

Q: A little bit? Okay.

Q2: If I can move in a little bit.

Q: Yeah.

Q2: [**indecipherable**] little bit better. Can't move too far.

Q: Yeah.

Q2: Point to yourself again?

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Q: Point to yourself. Okay.

Q2: There we go.

Q: Yeah.

A: And do you see that, Iranian soldiers on the side, too.

Q: Okay, when we see the – okay. Now, do you have any photographs from before – from 1939 with you in – in this pack?

A: I think so.

Q: So this would be –

A: You know, my daughter also, you know, took and make picture for this dissertation she wrote, so that's why I have some of them here, some of them there.

Let me see. Oh, this is in **Ratzkibor**(ph) – oh, I am sorry, and you can see that on the back you can draw – drawings.

Q: Okay. So wi – you will point – are you the little girl with the blonde –

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Okay. And is your father **Mussolini** there?

A: Yes.

Q: All right. So hold it up against yourself like the other one.

A: All right.

Q: And this is the summer of 1939.

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A: Correct. August, probably.

Q: August 1939, when – you tell us where it is.

A: It's in **Ratzkibor**(ph), which is now **Lithuania**. It was a camp where young men from colleges were prepared for military work.

Q: And who's the little girl who is stretching her arms out?

A: I have no – oh, it's myself.

Q: That's you. And if you flip it over, the photograph over –

A: Yes, here it is.

Q: And your – and when would – when do you think you drew such pictures?

A: I think I – I drew it still in **Russia**, I think. I'm not sure.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

A: Thank you. And there's one in [**indecipherable**], I show it to you later.

Q: Okay. You have one underneath your – yeah.

A: That's my –

Q: Okay, your kerchief.

A: – kerchief.

Q: All right, let's cut for a minute, and then there are the documents that I bro –

**[break]** Okay, tell me, who is in this picture, who is in this photograph?

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A: It's a – I, and – myself with my dog named **Sotka**(ph). And this is in **Zaleszczyki**.

Q: In **Zaleszczyki**.

A: And I believe it's 1938 or '39, I'm not sure. No, it has to be '38.

Q: In 1938. So, a year before everything happens.

A: Right.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

A: Thank you.

Q: It's – **[break]** Okay, so Mrs. **Sabina**, have you ever seen these types of documents before?

A: No, never. This is the first time I've seen that.

Q: All right. And it – they refer to – I see your mother, which is a **DP** registration record. Can you tell me a little bit – when you look through them, what do they say to you, these documents? That one, and the others. You can take it down and flip through it now.

A: That they are very accurate. I'm surprised.

Q: Yes?

A: I really am.

Q: What are they accurate about?



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A: Well, where we were. They – they – the year that – where we were. I – I – I – I'm astounded. Who keeps this? How – how did they get into the – the – this registry. Well, I know it's displaced persons, but when did they collect all this?

Q: After the war.

A: After the war.

Q: After the war. It looks like most of these are documents after the war, from – they are from the international tracing service. Do they have a value for you?

A: Yes, because I – I'll have to per – really look at them more carefully, but it just comes back what – what I believed was – is true, and here it is **Vandorf**(ph) resettlement center, you know, for example, you know. And it – that – and –

Q: So it substantiates your story.

A: Yes, in a way, yeah – well, in a way, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Not in a way, yes. Unbelievable, yeah.

Q: Do you think that – do you – this service, and these – this archive is available through – a digitized copy of the entire archive is at the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**, and people can give requests to find out if they have family documents.

A: Oh, very –

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Q: What do you think – do you think it's something that is valuable for people to know and have?

A: Oh, absolutely. You know, after a while you sort of – I don't want to say we – you lose your identity, but you think to yourself – you – you want to connect with others with similar experiences, and when you go from – when the – the way we went from country to country, here and there, you lose – you lose relationships. And then you try to reestablish them, but it's very difficult, because years go in between, and it's totally different when you were 10, and now you are 20, or whatever. And there were so many – you know, you had friends, but they all disappeared, because some went to **Australia**, some went here. I don't remember some of their names. And it's – it also somehow affects you, it seems to me, where you just look – lose connection with people that you – you really were close to.

Q: And when you see this –

A: And when you see this, you know, it sort of comes with, oh yeah, I really did exist, it really happened.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: So it's not only – it's not only documentary proof against those who would deny your story, it is documentary proof to yourself.

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A: Yes. Yeah, you do – you probably don't need that proof, but it's good to see that it's here, tha-that someone really took the time to put it all together, and oh yeah, here I am, yeah. And in **[indecipherable] Beirut**. Unbelievable. Yes, very much. Very ex – amazing amount of ra – from what I see, very accurate documentation.

Q: Thank you. Thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

Q: Okay, that's it.

**Conclusion of Interview**