

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with John Krawiec January 29, 2015 RG-50.030*0782

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PREFACE

The following interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

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JOHN KRAWIEC **January 29, 2015**

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **John Krawiec**, on January 29th, 2015, in **Evanston, Illinois**. Thank you very, very much Mr. **Krawiec** for agreeing to speak with us today.

Answer: Pleasure.

Q: Before we get into all of the difficult times of the war years, I'm going to ask a number of questions about what your life was like in pre-wars years; and the idea is to get a sense of the world you were born into, the people that you knew, who you were close to; so that when the war comes we can understand how things changed, and what was lost. So my first question is the very basic: can you tell me the date of your birth?

A: June 15, 1919.

Q: And where were you born?

A: Village **Bahuszets**(ph), county of **Przemyśl** in **Poland**.

Q: Can you tell me approximately where is this place, the village?

A: It is southern **Poland** now, close to border with **Ukraine**.

Q: Okay. Is it still within the territory of today's **Poland**?

A: Yes, it's still in territory of **Poland**, yes.

Q: Okay. And, what was your name at birth?

A: **Jan**.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: **Jan.**

A: **Jan Francis.**

Q: **Jan František**, would that be?

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: **František.**

A: **Jan Franciszek.**

Q: **Jan Franciszek Krawiec?**

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. You were born in 1919. So tell me a little bit about your father and your mother. What was his name, what was her name?

A: Mother was **Ludwiga**(ph), father **Michal**(ph). They – they – they got little farm in the village. So I was born on the village, on farm. And first – first years of my life were very happy, run around in fields and forests, it was nice – as the river **San**, which is large river. So that was really happy years. And I was not an angel, because my neighbors of my parents called me little devil of kra – kraft – **Krawiec** little devil. So I was little devil. And from little devil, naturally angel cannot grow up angel. So I was – when I grew up, I was not angel neither.

Q: So what are some of the things that you would do that earned you this title of little devil?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Well, I don't remember, you know, because it was when I was seven, eight years old And – but I was – I – I suppose that I was a little devil.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't – I can admit that. Then, when I went to high school, and because that was eight years high school, called gymnasium.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And that was from Austrian times yet. It change later, but I was still going there all eight years high school. So, normally after four grades, but my mother said, my little boy, let him stay, one year younger. So I went to high school after third grade.

Q: I see.

A: And so I was in a c – in a class, I was one year older of my classmate.

Q: Did you –

A: So –

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: I have two brothers and sisters. One brother died shortly after the war, and I had some very bad feeling about that, because during the war, when I just started underground, here, even **[indecipherable]** means some things. But when the Gestapo came to pick me up, I was not home, and so I ran away, and they took him – he was 16 years old – and tortured him, tried to get information from him. And he

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January 29, 2015

knew quite a bit, but he didn't tell them anything. And so after three or four times of that, I was ready to give myself up to Gestapo, you know, to save him. But my mother told me, he already is – have some problems, and the – with his health after those tortures. So they will kill you, and they will kill him, so – but then they finally gave him – stop – stopped to take him. And so I thought that maybe to – but he got sick and shortly after the war in 1946, he die.

Q: A young boy.

A: Young boy, he was – well, not young boy, he was 20 – in '46, he was 23.

Q: Oh, he was 23 then.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. So, he was younger than you?

A: Oh yes, he was four years younger.

Q: What was his name?

A: **Miertek**(ph).

Q: **Miertek**(ph).

A: Yeah.

Q: And were you the oldest child in the family?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: I was the oldest one, the th – then sister **Valerie, Miertek(ph)** and **Zbyszek(ph)**.
Zbyszek(ph) is 10 years younger. He's still alive. Sister died about three years ago.
And the o – youngest one is still alive. He was – he is 10 years younger than I am.

Q: Does he live here, in the **United States** too?

A: No, he lives on the – in th – well, he live in the old house [**indecipherable**] they
built new one in the same spot where I was born.

Q: Oh. Was your family from – can you repeat the name of the village again?

A: **Bahuszets(ph)**.

Q: **Bahuszets(ph)**.

A: **Bahuszets(ph)**.

Q: **Bahuszets(ph)**. Was the family from **Bahuszets(ph)** for many generations?

A: Yes.

Q: And were – was it a farm family?

A: Farm family, small farm.

Q: About how many hectares?

A: Hectares? They got six [**indecipherable**] eight – about four – four hectares.

Q: Oh, that is kind of small, for a farm.

A: Yeah, it's – well, it was smaller, but then you have – there was **Krasicki(ph)**

[**indecipherable**] landlord family, and they get this, his land, give him only hundred

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

acres, and the rest they sell to the farmers in the village, so my father bought co – some hectare or two, I can't remember now.

Q: Mm-hm. Did your father serve in World War I?

A: He serve in World War I, in Austrian army. He was wounded, and he was getting pension. He got one leg about nine centimeters shorter.

Q: Because of his service? Because of the wound?

A: Because the wounds, yeah.

Q: Okay. And so, his service was in the Austro-Hungari – that was **Austro-Hungary** ti – had it ruled over this part of the – of **Poland**?

A: Yeah, that was this part, after partition of **Poland**, this part, [**indecipherable**] **Galicia**, southern **Poland** was part of **Austria**.

Q: Okay. And your mother? Tell me a little bit about her family. Were they also from the village of **Bahuszets**(ph)?

A: Same village, but not the same – little further. Few kilometers away, much larger la – much larger village, this was a number of people – families [**indecipherable**] and on the hills. And my mother came from a large family, but they had, let's see, 20 – they had 10 or 12 hectares of land. Yeah, they – they – their parents.

Q: How ma –

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: But th-th-they had some 10 or 11 children, so she was one – not the youngest one, but second from the youngest one.

Q: Mm-hm. And – but nevertheless, from the area.

A: And she – th – in this village they had seven grades school. In my village, was smaller, they had only five grade school.

Q: So when you went to gymnasium, did you go to another village?

A: Well, I go to – I was in **Przemyśl**.

Q: In **Przemyśl**. And that's a larger town?

A: Because there was no gymnasium anyplace close, and I have to leave it, **Przemyśl**, because there were buses already, but not very – that was ni – when I started, 1931. So –

Q: Twelve years old, yeah.

A: So, thir-thirt – '31. So, the buses were not very reliable, and not the time which would be good for me, you know, to get to school. Too early or too late. So you have to live there, live in **Przemyśl**.

Q: Was that – I mean, I've heard of many stories of people, you know, the – it's usually the oldest child, and particularly if it's a boy, who is designated to get whatever education there will be. Was that the case in your family?

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Well, not exactly. Th-That is true, because I was the oldest one, and my mother was [indecipherable] your father has this money, pension, you know, so it will help, you know, she wanted at least one. And then we were – we planned that the youngest one – I be already after studies, some position, whatever I will study, and so I will help the youngest brother to go too.

Q: Also, so that once you get –

A: Yeah, but there were only two of us from the village in the gymnasium.

Q: Only two?

A: Only two.

Q: And –

A: Because any other cannot afford it.

Q: I see. And gymnasium was not state sponsored. You had to pay.

A: Well, it was – well, I – it was state sponsored, there was 150 dollars a year f – **zloty** a year gan – the interest of 220 **zloty** a year. I get the – I don't have to pay, provided that I get good grades. So I didn't pay, but I have to live in town, so they have to pay my rent, and my food and everything else. So that was – that is – th-this was expensive.

Q: Did you miss home, as a 12 year old boy?

A: Well, sure, at the beginning, but later it all –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: You got used to it.

A: – new fre-friends you know, and so on. So, sure I was – specially the village itself, and my mother and father and my brothers. But it was hard to say it was any hardship, because it was not too far. I was coming for Easter and Christmas and vacation.

Q: In – in **Bahuszets**(ph), how large of a village was it? How many fams –

A: It has about 250 families.

Q: Oh, so it's not small. Did it have its own church?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: It was church for two villages.

Q: Okay.

A: An old church. They found in some history the parish already existed in – in si – hundred – 1640.

Q: Wow. Wow. Were there – were there any other kinds of people? That is, were there any Jews in **Bahuszets**(ph), or –

A: No.

Q: No.

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January 29, 2015

A: There was, nearby, four kilometer, was little town baho – **Dubiecko**. This was majority of Jewish.

Q: Okay.

A: It was 1,000 population.

Q: Okay.

A: **Dubiecko**, where the poet **Ignacy Krasicki** was born. V-Very –

Q: Very famous poet?

A: Very famous poet. The second, after **Kochanowski**, considered the second best poet in independent **Poland** before partition.

Q: I see. So, in the 18th century.

A: He was in 19th ce – during the partition.

Q: I see.

A: He was later bishop of – bishop of **Warmia**, which is little bos – pars of – part of **Prussia**, east **Prussia**.

Q: In your village, how developed was it? Did people have electricity and running water?

A: No. Before the war, no electricity, no running water. We had, because my father and few others get together and – in the – well, villages in valley over **San** river, and goes up. And on the – when the hills started, there – it was a good well, you

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

know, the good water. So they bil – make – discover this, and build the pipes through house, I didn't – 10 or 15 houses in the village. Private [indecipherable] you know. So we had running water, but no electricity. Electricity came after the war.

Q: After World War II?

A: After World II, yeah.

Q: Yeah. And did th –

A: They were started already electricity, because they built before the war be – they built on the rivers those dam, you know, and electric hydro – hydro-electric. And they built mi – villages nearby, had already electricity. And on the way to the town, you know, or they spread this electricity in the villages, too.

Q: Did any b –

A: But our village, no.

Q: Did anybody have an automobile in the village?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Only **Ravla(ph) Karszitski(ph)**, the – the landlord.

Q: Only the landlord had it.

A: Yeah.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: He pro – probal – priest didn't have neither.

Q: Okay.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Was the priest a very influential person?

A: Beg pardon?

Q: Was the local priest, you know, the village priest a very influential person?

A: Well, it depends. In my time there were two. One was a long time, but he was not very liked. And then next one came about two years before – two years maybe t – yeah, t-two years, t-two – three years an – before the war. And he was very liked, and he was influential, and – and he was completely different than his predecessor.

Q: In what way?

A: Bi – what?

Q: In what way?

A: Well, he wa – he's – he was more with the people, when his predecessor was more of a **Ravla(ph) Karszitski(ph)**, you know.

Q: More with the – with the landlord, and more –

A: Yes, aristocratic people, and so on. And – and this wa – they not – successor was more with the people. And I have something to do with that because when we came,

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January 29, 2015

I just happened ba – I [**indecipherable**] run into him. And we have a long talk, he asked point blank what happened, because in – bishop, they tell him that this – that this vil – village is qu-quite communist, many communists, which was not true. It was one. But the predecessor, well, that was local problems. There was a – the peasant party, and a youth organization, **wici(ph)**, which was quite radical. And the organizer of the **wici(ph)** became communist. He had some friends in **France**, and they tend to be communists in **France**, and they send him some literature –

Q: And he was influenced?

A: And he be – got influenced, so he became communist. But then – and that was the reason the government ca – the county office closed the – the local **wici(ph)** organization

Q: The youth organization.

A: Yeah. And so they got somebody else on his place, and so he was not influential, this guy in the village, really, but that is what happened. And 1935, I believe, there was a problem in the village, because the – the landlord had lot of land, and he need – and not much machinery. He had already some machinery, but a lot of work was done by hand, by people. So he pay from about a **zloty** a day, with a – with – on your own food. So, only a **zloty** a day.

Q: So that's considered not a lot of money.

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January 29, 2015

A: There was not a lot of money – well, that was a lot of money, but not enough, you know. Food would cost more than **zloty** a day, you know.

Q: Okay, so –

A: – or at least **zloty** for food, yeah.

Q: Okay, so somebody who would work his land –

A: So the youth, this organization, although was formally disbanded by the government, but they still existed, and they have – they have library, and even **[indecipherable]** them, because they ask me what kind of book to buy, and they have some eve – may – even some to – correct money for thing. So they decided to strike. Well, strike, and here is time of harvest, you know –

Q: In the summer.

A: And he need the people to take care of the – and the priest, previous one, on the – in the church, stated that cris – Christ said muts – pray and work and pray, something like that. And so, it is cri – it is sin to destroy, to – to do harvest, you know, God's whatever.

Q: Food.

A: Yeah. And so – and when he said that from the altar, the young people walk out of the church, you know.

Q: Oh ho. Oh ho. Yeah.

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January 29, 2015

A: So that became the story that it is communist, you know. So, they were not communist, but they just didn't like it, and when the new priest came, and I – as I said, I just hap – by accident I ran into – to him, about first or second day when we came, before he even has – has a first mass in church. So we talk, and I tell him all about. So he change – so he knew how to handle himself.

Q: Okay.

A: And I was – that was ki – at the end of vacation, when I was – not vacation, but – yeah, in summer, before it's – the school started. And so I went to school, to **Przemysł**, and by return for east – for Christmas, I walk with my father at night, the night – midnight –

Q: Mass?

A: – mass.

Q: Mm-hm, at Christmastime, yeah.

A: For Christmas – cris – the na – eve. And so we walk on from the priest's – priest's house, p-priest walk with one of the leaders of this –

Q: Strike.

A: – youth organization.

Q: Okay.

A: So I se – I said to her – my father, oh-oh, it looks good.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Yeah.

A: And really, when we get there, all the yo-young people were there, singing, you know, carols and so on. So it was very – everything went back to normal.

Q: Was your family political at all?

A: Well, my father belonged to this peasant party you know. This was –

Q: This was – was this –

A: But he was not very active, or – he just belonged.

Q: So – but the peasant party, was it – what kind of orientation did it have?

A: Well, it was – it was for cons – but it was conservat – farmers, small farmers, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: So they had – they – they were for post government to get rid of those lard – large landlords, and divided that between the peasants and the small farmers. Wi – not take away, but they paid the landlord for – for the land.

Q: So, land reform.

A: Land reform.

Q: It's land reform.

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January 29, 2015

A: And – and some small taxes for poor farmers, you know, and things like that. Local. Then the school, you know especially when the – some places had – they want to have school. For – for example, just four grades to have, more –

Q: More grades.

A: More grades in this school, like the large villages have. And so, various things like that. It was not very radical.

Q: So your – your father made his living and was able to support the family, both from the pension, and from farming the land?

A: Farming, yeah.

Q: And did the – did he have any help to do it, either by hiring people, or with the children?

A: Well, sometimes – in some – specially, you know, with his leg shorter, he has a problem to – lifting heavy things on one leg, because the other one was not – so in some, for some job, he hire for one day or two days, one man or two mens, or women, it depends what kind of job. **[inaudible]**

Q: Did the kids – did you and your brothers and your sister help out on the farm?

A: Oh sure, when we grow up, I was, I don't know how – how many, four or five years old, I – I already watched the cows. We had three cows we have to watch them so they don't go on next – next owner, he – who has something.

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Q: So y – in other word, they stay within their land.

A: Yes.

Q: So that they stay within their land.

A: And so the first job I – I had when I was young, five, six years old; watch cows.

Q: Did you have to get up earlier in the morning to do it?

A: Well, sure.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah.

Q: What time?

A: Oh, about 5:30, 6:00, 5:30, something like that.

Q: For kids like – for kids who grew up in the city, that is a different world.

A: I know that. I know that, but I wouldn't change.

Q: No?

A: No. No, I won't change.

Q: So –

A: It's lazy – lazy life in the city. No, I wouldn't change. That was – well, we don't

li – I don't like that when I was this age, but it was – besides that, I was so many

fun, you know, afterwards. This river, this – I was nine years old when I swim

across the river, it was nice sized river, and it got wild bur – in the –

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January 29, 2015

Q: You got in a whirlpool?

A: Yes.

Q: No –

A: Across the – that was the thing, you know, to cross, get across, get out of that. I –
I did that when I was nine years old.

Q: Oh my goodness –

A: Naturally my father didn't do – know about it, and my mother.

Q: Mm-hm. Oh, that's a definition of a devil, you know, who the devil is.

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: That is definition, too.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Little devil.

Q: And did you finish your high school years in **Przemyśl**, did you say?

A: Yes. I graduated in 1938.

Q: Okay. And then you were 19 years old, yes?

A: Yes. And we have to – we have to go to the se – to the army.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: We are drafted to the army, but we have choice, we can – decided. Go to the army, or go to university, and show them that – and register at the university, so they will –

Q: Delay your army.

A: – delay my service until I graduated from university.

Q: So which did you choose?

A: So I di – I decided to go to serve in the army, get rid of that, and then go to study. And the univer – the army made reservation for me in University of **Lwów**, for political science as a background for journalism.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Because I was dreaming about journalism, and in high school already, I wrote to some papers.

Q: Isn't that interesting?

A: I was the – I was the best in the class in the – in history, literature, and the worst one in mathematics.

Q: Can we cut just for a second? [**break**]

A: And that – only I know that, but teacher knew that too. So that was –

Q: Oh, unfortunate.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – not very –

Q: Yeah. Okay.

A: And history – and history and literature, I – we have, you know, some – to write some work at home, mi – minimum 10 pages. No – yeah, minimum 10 pages.

Usually I bring 25 pages.

Q: You had a lot to say.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Yes, okay.

A: I always – history, we have some – for example, there's some part of some medieval times or something, so we got chapter in the books – chapters in the book. I've – I – I read the whole book, about that m – not – sometimes not once, but even twi – two different books on – on the topic. On the second – first World War, I read several books on the se – first World War.

Q: So you were – you were planning to go to the University of **Lwów**?

A: Yes.

Q: But first you accepted the draft into the army service. And tell me about your army service a little bit.

A: Well, that was cadet school for ca – cadet school for reserve officers. It was a special military school, with different – well, we get all basic trainings as anybody

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

else, but we have also additional – we – they prepare us to be commanders of, like a section. There was **druzyna**, they call in Polish, it was 18 soldiers. So that, for example. And platoon, there were three section, so all together 60-some soldiers. There – we are trained to lead these units, you know. And then we end this in – end of July, I graduated from the school as corporal –

Q: Is it rank of corporal?

A: – corporal – corporal, but [**indecipherable**] you know, there was addition, that I am not the regular corporal, but this cadets –

Q: A little higher?

A: The cadets' school, the con – so after three years I'll be second lieutenant, you know.

Q: I see.

A: Three years not serving, but every year during vacation, going for four weeks training [**indecipherable**] in the military, and so on.

Q: Where did you go to – where did you attend – where was this cadet school located?

A: In **Jaroslów**.

Q: **Jaroslów**.

A: Yeah.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: And where is **Jarosław**, in **Poland**?

A: Not far from **Przemyśl**; north – little northwest of **Przem** – about 30 kilometer.

Q: Okay, okay. Okay, so the first year you graduated, and you have a rank of corporal, as, you know –

A: Yes, that's in July 19 – end of July 1939, I was assigned to infantry regiment in **Przemyśl**. That was the beginning of Septemb – of Octob – August; and September first, war break out.

Q: Okay, before –

A: So I was in the military when the war break out.

Q: I want to come to that in a minute. In your village – in your village, was politics discussed much? Was it of any –

A: Well, it is, it was. The village – this part is former **Galicia**, you know, former **Austria** – part of **Poland** which was under **Austria**. It – this peasant party was very popular. There was – in the village, sometimes you can find nobody else – nobody connected with any other party but this one.

Q: Okay, and because I don't know much about Polish interwar politics, was **Pilsudski's** party, or the people who followed him, also connected?

A: Well, they were some even – even – well, basically, the peasant party was not for **Pilsudski**.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: But – but even among them, there were some followers of **Pilsudski**, and in the same thing, although they were pow – followers of the peasant party.

Q: Okay.

A: **Pilsudski** was quite popular as – as a person.

Q: As a person, I see, I see. So, do you remember any events from the summer of 1939, before the war breaks out, of – in your life?

A: Nothing special, normal – it was normal – normal thing. I was in military, so I got one week to go before – at the end of the school, I got one week for to go to my parents, you know, to my family.

Q: One week leave.

A: One – we got one leave, and then report in the regiment, infantry regiment in – **Przemyśl**.

Q: What about international events, in **Bahuszets**(ph), in – in **Przemyśl** –

A: Well, pi – nothing happen –

Q: – were people talking –

A: – small village, there's not much inter – I – I was interested because I was dreaming about journalist, now history and politics and so on. So I was very interested, and I still remember the day, 1938, before we register, report to the

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

military, I met with some colleague, and we went to movie. And at that time there was no television, but before movie they have news in te – in ke – before movies.

Q: So newsreels.

A: Newsreel, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: So they got mu – news. And I remember this news, that was end of September, I think, 1938.

Q: Okay.

A: When Prime Minister **McMillen** came to **England** after meeting **Hitler** –

Q: Oh, you mean, she wa –

A: – and they give up – give up **Sudetenland**, you know, **Czechoslovakia**. And I bring you peace. And millions of Londoners greet him, you know, and go – and not year e – not even a year, because of September 1st, 1939, h-he invaded – **Hitler** invaded **Poland**.

Q: So you remember seeing the –

A: So, I se –

Q: – **Neville Chamberlain**.

A: **Chamberlain**.

Q: Yes.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – but – probably not **McMillen, Chamberlain**.

Q: Mm-hm. And peace in our time.

A: Yes, yes –

Q: Peace in our time.

A: – this is – in this – this movie, this – I still is – I see this picture, you know.

Q: And what did you think at that point? Did you think he was naïve?

A: Well, I don't think what – after all, great power – or **Great Britain**, everybody
thi – thought that there's just something, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: You finally achieve something, and you have peace.

Q: Hm. And so you took an interest in international affairs. Like, did you follow the
events in **Germany** with the rise of the Nazi party? Were you interested in –

A: Oh yeah, sure.

Q: Mm-hm. Did people talk about that at all, in –

A: Oh yes, sure. You know, Poles are anti-Germans – Germans, for centuries.

Q: Okay.

A: **Poland** and **Germany** always border, and the border moves back and forth all
the time. So there are mixed territories, and – and so on. So there were – there was a

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

even saying that Pole – Pole and German never will be brothers, or something like that.

Q: What about what was going on to the east? Did you – ah, did you know much, or was there much news about what was going on in the **Soviet Union**?

A: Yes. And the rest of **Europe** didn't know much, rest of the war. But we had the long border, and in spite of very tight security on Soviet side, some sneaked through to **Poland**. And so we know from them and Polish press, interview them, and so we knew very well what is going on, and that **Stalin** is not better than **Hitler**. But the rest of the **Europe**, rest of the world didn't believe it. Especially intellectuals were quite left wing, to the left bent, and they – any those news about gulags, you know, and so on, they consider capitalist propaganda against Soviets, you know, against socialism, which is the future of the mankind, and so on. But we know quite a bit, and Polish press publish that quite often. So we had no – we had no –

Q: Was there – okay.

A: – any doubt.

Q: In your – in **Bahuszets**(ph), did people have radios?

A: No, not at that time. There – there have, the **Karszitski**(ph) have, and then later prop – pi – pastor have a – a radio.

Q: Okay, so the – the chur – the – the priest had one, and so did the landlord?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, but regular people –

A: Regular people can't afford it.

Q: Okay.

A: And beside that, was no electricity on top of that, so you need batteries on top of.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know. So – but anyway, when war break out and occupation, all Poles have to give the radios to Germans. No Pole can own a radio. So this **Karszitski**(ph), aristocratic family, due to connection with some aristocratic family in **Austria** – because – the territory was, before the war, part of **Austria**. So some of them were even in the Austrian **[indecipherable]** in parliament. Polish aristocrat, you know, representing – because **Galicia** at that time had already **[indecipherable]** you know, some –

Q: You're talking before the first World War?

A: Yeah, be – be – sin-since ni – since ninet – 1868, until the first World War. So the – through connection with some aristocratic family in **Austria**, they got permission to – to own a radio, to keep the radio. But the village was right on the **San River**, which was boundary bet-between German and Soviet occupation.

Q: Really?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: So – yes, at the beginning, it was. And **San** River was the boundary. And because of that, the **grenzschutz**, the border guard, German border guard had a sec – have a – the group, you know, how many, some unit. And they – and they – and the – and the landlord has two villas, one old, and new. So the Germans took the new villa and family moved to old villa. And it was old, but little – maybe little – no **[indecipherable]** from the **San** River, which was boundary. From the river you can see the – the other side of the river with the Soviet guards, you know.

Q: Oh really? You were able to do that?

A: Yeah, well, across the river, boundary.

Q: Yeah. So tell me, where were you on September 1st, 1939? Do you remember?

A: September 1st, 1939?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I was in the military.

Q: Do you remember where?

A: In **Przemysł**.

Q: And do you remember how you learned of the war?

A: About the war, we learn very quickly, about two, three – three, four days. About three days before. The – the government declared mobilization. So the first civilians, you know, reservists, those who serve two – year or two years ago, start to

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

arrive, but then they started that, because – under pressure from **France** and **England**, that there is provocation for **Hitler**, you know.

Q: If there – if you mobilize.

A: If **Poland** mobilize. Because he concentrated army on Polish border.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And so that was not provocation, but we mobilize. That was not provocation.

Q: Of course, of course.

A: So – but couple days later, they declare mobilization again.

Q: Okay.

A: And so I – and we – we – I was in the barrack in t – in town, and we were, all the civilians, we s-send them – give them, you know, uniforms, and organized them in section platoons, company and so on. And they, I don't know when they went. They got orders to go somewhere.

Q: Mm-hm. Okay.

A: So that was when the war – and September first, early morning, there was alarm in the bar – barracks, because they bomb – they bomb **Lwów**, which was 98 – about

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

100 kilometer east, and also some – some – something at the end of the town, some military – this thing, bomb, so, we got alarm.

Q: So, the German war planes went – flew as far east as **Lwów**, and –

A: All **Poland**.

Q: All **Poland**, even the parts that were later occupied by the Russians?

A: Yes.

Q: I see.

A: They had bases already in **Slovakia**. They took over before **Czechoslovakia**.

Czechs became part of prot-protectorate they call, of **Germany**, and **Slovakia** became independent, thanks to **Hitler**, you know.

Q: And so, what was the – what were the first days of the war like for you? What were you doing?

A: Well, for me was nothing but we were doing the same thing as before, arming an-and organizing reservists into companies and so on, and send them away.

Q: Mm-hm. Okay.

A: And then was second – third day, finally we get to the train and went west –

Q: Okay.

A: – to the front.

Q: So then what happened?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Well, we – that was in the evening. So we get the warning – well, first thing, that we stop in many places because the tracks were bombed, so they have to wait until they repair tracks. And we get early morning to **Tarnow**, so not far from **Przemyśl**, well, about over a hundred two – about 200 kilometer. And from there we walk down south, and me – me da – knowing geography for – quite good, we came – I because disturbed because already here, so far away from the west – west, bombing. But then they got already **Slovakia**. So they get off **Slovakia** northeast, and we –

Q: So German soldiers –

A: – we took – we took the – our regiment – I was that – the division. We get on **Dunajec** River, it was de – running from **Carpathian** mountains north. So we get down to the river, and it was hilly country, foots of **Carpathian** mountains. So down and dig ho-holes, you know holes there, and to defense the river. So when I get there, I say well, that is – situation was, we back, from we are so far. And then we hear, very shortly after, artillery, then machine guns south – left from us, not too far. So well, I know this **Slovakia**, I had came from **Slovakia** and – and this is what happened, and that was the first to – we tried to stop them, but we didn't do much, because further they get from **Slovakia**, they get on our backs.

Q: Oh, so in other words, you were fighting with German forces that were coming through **Slovakia**, to **Poland**, but they were able even to go behind you, and –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Yes, because **Slovakia** was reaching further east.

Q: I see. And attack you from the behi – from behind, as well?

A: Yeah, so it – it – so we were through next day, and I was in – in unit which supposed to slow down the advance of Germans.

Q: Okay.

A: So to help, give time the units to go –

Q: To retreat.

A: – re-retreat further west – further east. And at the evening, crossed at the evening [**indecipherable**] the shooting machine guns, artillery where there was a river, **Wisłok** river, where our units went. And so – well, knowing geography so well, there is just Germans get there before we get there, on this. And the soldiers start to run toward us, you know, back.

Q: Oh, you mean the ones who were retreating are now re – running back towards you?

A: Coming back to us, you know, we were [**phone ringing**] – we were –

Q: Okay, let's stop. [**break**] Okay, so you – before the phone rang, you were telling me that you had some skirmishes, or some fight with the invading German armies, who were coming through **Slovakia**, but they had circled around and back –

A: Yes.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: – and so you're retreating forces, in – in the end, ended up running back to you.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, then what happened?

A: And then, I was in the unit which supposed to slow down the main forces, you know.

Q: Right.

A: C-Coming from west. And so it wa – er – I was – but my **druzyna**, means section, 18 soldiers with machine gun. Then it was one heavy machine gun, and that was one anti-tank gun. So, altogether those three different units, the sergeant was a commander of that. So when the soldiers start to come in, he ask what is going on. So – and they said that, our forces were crossing the bridge, when from the southwest, from **Slovakia**, the tanks, German tanks, machine guns and artillery, start to bombard this bridge. So many people were killed on that bridge. And then panic, on – somewhere on this side, didn't know what to do. Some try looking for some spot where the river is not deep, so they can walk across.

Q: And this is the **San** River?

A: No, that was **Wisłok**.

Q: **Wisłok**, okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: **Wisłok**. And – **Wisłoka**. **Wis** – **Wisłok** and **Wisłoka**, this was **Wisłoka**. **Wisłok** is next one. And – and so the sergeant, after hearing that, disarm – disbanded the whole thing. Go anywhere you want, destroy the arms, and go wherever you want.

And –

Q: So you didn't surrender to the Germans, you just –

A: No, no.

Q: Okay.

A: Disarm and go wherever you want.

Q: Okay.

A: Go home. And so I asked my soldiers, my 18 soldiers, who came from the villages where we were going, near **Rzeszów - Przemyśl** so, on the way, if they wanted, I – I am sure the next – next defense line will be on **San**, and I know the territory, so [**indecipherable**] go northeast, so we will get there, if night comes, we will get there. All 18 decided to go with me.

Q: So you would continue fighting on a different location?

A: No, not fighting, we were just marching.

Q: Marching, okay.

A: To get to – to the la – the defense line.

Q: Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: And so we stop, we sleep at ti – at – during the day, and walk at night –

Q: Okay.

A: – because the airplanes.

Q: Right.

A: But before we get there, there was what, three days, the – many civilians from [indecipherable] this was part of **Czechoslovakia** which was [indecipherable] Poles and Czech in 1918, local, divided this territory according – living as – as many Poles on Czech side and Czechs on Polish side. So this part, th-they decided this line [indecipherable] river was the boundary, and that was part of west side of the river. But **Beneš** the –

Q: **Edward Beneš**, mm-hm.

A: – **Edward Beneš**, the prime minister of Czecho – **Czechoslovakia** –

Q: – **Slovakia**.

A: – after the war, he was with **Masaryk** in **Paris**, and he has good contacts, and take him – **Poland** was – has a problem with Ukrainians, you know, in the east. Then still Germans were in the west, and the Soviets are coming, approaching from the east. So the – they has to – in the army, that the army was in the west. So they decided and they took this t-to [indecipherable]. And this became, you know, point of –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Contention.

A: – contention, the hard feeling between Poles and Czechs. So, in 1938, when **Hitler** get the **Sudetenland**, **Poland** took this part to the line which they were divided bet – b-by Poles and Czechs in 1918. And they were really good Poles. They were oh – ma – one interesting thing, they were not Catholic, they were Protestant. And, on the way when I go there, couple hundreds of those young men from [**indecipherable**] who serve in Czechs army, they – wh-when the war break out, when that – they wa – went to Polish places to mo – to get mobilized, to get to Polish army. But they were moving already, because approach mu – Germans were approaching, so they were moving. And they were walking, trying to get mo –

Q: To the Polish side.

A: – to Polish uniforms, and arms, and fight. And – but I don't remember now, 150 to cro – close to 200 of them joined me. So I –

Q: Really?

A: – yes. And I was walking with unit of 18 soldiers with arm, and everything, and here, civilians, you know. And I – this is – I get them to the **San** River. There was a major who take this, my **druzyna**, my – this 18 soldiers away, uniform, and armed. And he got couple hundred civilians like that, walking, trying to get mobilized. And I don't know how many, four or 500 of them. He told me to li – get them to the s –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

railroad station, which was quite a way. It took next – one day and next to railroad station to **Lublin**, and they'd get – they will be mobilized there –

Q: Okay.

A: – arms, and organize. So this is the way I lost my soldiers, and I

[**indecipherable**] in uniform, with four or 500 civilians, I walked to the railroad station. And next day we get to the station, train was waiting for us, and – but it take all day, although there was not far, about a hundred, maybe 120 kilometers, but tracks were bombed, so we have to wait until they – they fixed the tracks, so we can go back. And we get – but by evening we get to **Lublin**, and we just get off the – not on this pre – passenger station, because there was not passenger car, but the to – no, cattle cars, you know, those bar –

Q: Oh yeah, yeah, mm-hm.

A: You know. Covered, but not – not person. So it start in the – not in the personal station, but in the station where they unloaded –

Q: Freight.

A: – cargo.

Q: Yeah, mm-hm.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Yeah. So, and we just get off this station on the streets, when the last le – be – before evening, the last air force at the German air force attack, and they bombed this station completely.

Q: Really.

A: But we were lucky –

Q: You got through.

A: – a few minutes before, we left this.

Q: Amazing.

A: Yeah.

Q: Amazing, yeah.

A: It was. We were lucky. And it was a su – funny observation. So we fell down, you know [**indecipherable**] you know, we fell down in the street, and against the fence, wooden fence. What wooden fence give you protection? But this is – this, you know, in there, some feeling that you got some protection.

Q: Well, you know, the – how the human mind works in panic –

A: Yes, yes, yeah.

Q: – you know, it's – it's – it's crazy.

A: And so then, after that, I get this old group, and policeman show me the road to – to military barracks. So get there, it was dark already, and the – I went inside, we –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

on the yard, we sit down. And I went inside to report to some – some major in charge. So I report to him, and he told me sorry, the Germans cr-cross **Vistula** River, just west of **Lublin**, and we are evacuating down, so get your people and walked over [**indecipherable**]. And I said well, we didn't eat all day, so can we have something to eat? Well, there is no problem, the kitchen is still working. So we wait there, we get good. That was the last military –

Q: Meal.

A: – dinner –

Q: Yeah.

A: – I get in my life. And it was good one. And so after the supper, the – during night, we walk, and by morning we get close to **Chelm**. There was some officer, a lieutenant who si – directed us to the forest nearby. And in this forest, there were mountains of uniforms, guns, machine guns, artillery even, pieces, brand new, not even used. Still like they were prepar – you know –

Q: Preparing?

A: – in their [**indecipherable**] houses. And the other people, and other soldiers, and they were organizing, forming. And so I get to some major; an older fellow. I still remember he didn't use [**indecipherable**] but he had just cap, and his white hairs, you know, he see – he was fighting during 1920 with the war with **Soviet Union**,

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Poland and the **Soviet Union**. And so – and he – he was a really te – very ideal commander. And he, fast – fast – you know, take this stuff, and put down, and grab – we have to get fast from here. And lucky that he did this, be – he organize battalion. I became again, commander of **druzyna**, 18 soldiers.

Q: Mm-hm. And so those – those two hun –

A: And we walk not too far away from the forest, and not in column, you know –

Q: Yes.

A: – but we spread already. When the air – German airplanes start to bomb this forest.

Q: Okay.

A: So we fell down on fields, and just seeing not too far away, what was going on there. They hid – you know, there were many ammunition. So they bomb it, and the ammunition –

Q: Would explode.

A: – explode.

Q: Yeah.

A: And so it was a hell, completely hell. And then we look in our major, and see how smart he is that he push us fast, fast, fast, you know, we get out. And then I

[indecipherable]

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Was it – was this pla – you said this munitions mound of – of – of – of weaponry was in the middle of a forest?

A: They bring from warehouses, you know, before the Germans arrive.

Q: Okay. And was it visible, do you think, from the sky?

A: Well, the forest was – it was in the forest, but they can see it as –

Q: Of course.

A: – here and there, the ki – the for – the trees don't cover –

Q: Everything.

A: – completely –

Q: Yes.

A: – everything, so they can see it.

Q: So it was a great target.

A: And they see there are many people around, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: So then there we were with th – with this battalion, with this major, I was participating in the very, very si – hard fight. I lost from my 18 people, I lost six.

Q: Oh, that's a third, yeah, that's a lot.

A: Yeah, but we were fighting until 27.

Q: Wow.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: September 27.

Q: That's a long time.

A: Yes. We were fighting Germans, and on – from the back, we got Soviets. That was somewhere between **Zamosc** and **Tomaszów Lubelski**.

Q: Did you – so, first you we – you had this equipment, and you were fighting the Germans, and then when were you fighting the Soviets?

A: Well, we were not fighting, because that was – they was in the middle of **Poland** already. Matter of fact, this territory, they were – next day they stop and wer – withdrew, because they decide to change the boundary between **Germany** and Soviet occupation.

Q: Had you any idea, did – you personally, did you have any idea that there had been an agreement between the Nazis and the Soviets?

A: No, we didn't have any idea about that.

Q: Okay. Okay. So it must have been a surprise?

A: We know that they were – between **Hitler** and **Stalin**, they were the worst enemies, you know, all the time.

Q: Yeah.

A: The – this anti [**indecipherable**] pact with **Germany**, **Italy** and **Japan**.

Q: Yeah.

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January 29, 2015

A: Against Soviets, you know.

Q: So it must have been a real surprise.

A: Yes, it was a surprise.

Q: Okay. So you fought until the 27th of September?

A: Yes.

Q: That's a good long time. Wasn't **Warsaw** already occupied by that time?

A: **Warsaw** was – **Warsaw** surrendered next day.

Q: Twenty-eighth?

A: Twenty-eighth.

Q: So, what was the – what was the surrender like for you? I mean –

A: Well, the surrender was like this, our major – we were marching during the night, fighting during the day.

Q: Okay.

A: As I said, I know geography, and I was quite disturbed that we were practically fighting in some unit, same territory, not too far away. We on – we get information that we try to – back through German line to help **Lwów**.

Q: Okay.

A: **Lwów** was still fighting.

Q: Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: And so that we – well, but that was too strong, we cannot break through them. So we back some up – so then we withdrew, move someplace else, try something someplace else. So that was the – our situation. And then finally, one day, to our surprise, at evening, instead of march somewhere, they told us to go to forest and sleep. Na-Naturally, we – guards and so on. So, next morning, it was September, you know, a short – day short already. We get up, nothing happened. So finally officers get out, and in order to – company, there was three companies in battalion, plus one platoon of machine guns, heavy machine guns. And we had also one artillery piece assigned to this battalion. So we get on the – near the fo – out of forest, on the field, organized like in – like in a – peace time. Company, company, you know? And then the major get to us, and he said just one not very nice word. He speak le – to – I speak to you last time, and so he says here, you know, what we went, here are Germans, here are Soviets. It was completely surprise to us, that was 27. And then cross the border 17, but we didn't know. We were in fight – we don't – we had no radi – radio, we don't have press, and ja – newspaper, or anything. We were fighting during the day, and marching at night, from one spot to another spot. So destroy the arm, and go home. And at that moment, lieutenant, professional soldier, lieutenant under – under **[indecipherable]** first, at the right side of the co – right end of the company, shoot himself, and fell down. And the major re – hearing

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

that, hearing the gun, you know, shoot; turn around and pointed. He is coward. This is the easiest way to do when it's difficult time, to shoot yourself. We are needed.

The war is not ended. **E-England** and **France** are fighting. We are needed. Our job is to get home, not tra – try not to be taken prisoners of war, but get home, because we will be needed. And so – well, we destroy our guns, and then I found out that I cannot put a to – written [**indecipherable**] week or so, so my feet were bang – bang –

Q: In – your feet were hurting.

A: Hurting, yeah. So I went to some little river, took the shoes off, wash them. My feet were – the left foot swo – swell, and it was – I – I was – I had fever. I feel, you know, fever, and it was painful. I cannot put this back – shoe back on. So I put sh-shoe o-over my arms, you know, and walked barefooted. There was little – little mill – using water, you know, water mill. And they told me that I have to drop this uniform, because they already know from some people Bolsheviks are not far away, and they took all those in uniform, they took – they take them –

Q: They were arresting them?

A: Yeah. And so – well, some – they give me – they find me some old –

Q: Clothes?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – cl-clo – shir – well, pants and – and jacket. And – and they tell me to go in the forest in **[indecipherable]** to go in forest and take all – and put this, my uniform, in the hole, so they – they don't found in the house.

Q: That's right.

A: So I did that, and then I start to walk home.

Q: Did you – did you get something for your foot?

A: Well, I – I get from them, they got not much, but I have some friend from military, from this – but he was in different regiment, so I don't know if he return already or not, but not far away in the forest there.

Q: Okay, so did – but was th – did you still walk barefoot, or did you –

A: Barefoot, yeah.

Q: You still were barefoot.

A: And I get to little town, **Shinyawa(ph)**, and at that time there, the Soviets are take – walk – getting to the town. So I turned on the road to this friend of mine who – whose father was forest ranger. And so I get there and he was home already, and his mother took care, you know. We had, wi-with us, some bandages, some three medication: aspirin – **aspiryna, jodyna – aspiryna, jodyna, iryzyna(ph)**.

Q: And what is that? So aspirin –

A: Aspirin, iodine and a **[indecipherable]** it is for – for stomach –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: – constipation, yeah. To relieve stomach, constipation. There were three medication which we had with us.

Q: Okay.

A: So – and I got home some, and so his mother take care of this, my foot, and I spend there, for a week or more before it heals. And so – and then I walk back – not – well, it was far, but –

Q: So tell me, what had – what had happened to your foot? Had it swollen within the shoe? Had it gotten injured?

A: Well, it – it – it get infected. It was infection.

Q: Okay. Okay. And it was because you weren't taking your shoes off?

A: Yes, because, you know, we were –

Q: You were fighting.

A: – sleeping, fighting.

Q: And sleeping in shoes.

A: And when you – after all day, you know, fighting, run and – and so on, so you get finally sleep, you – before you hit the ground, you sleep already.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't need any sleeping pills.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Not after that kind of a day.

A: No.

Q: No. Okay. So, eventually, do you get home to **Bahuszets**(ph)?

A: So I get home, and short – a-and then late already, it was sep – September –
October 15 or 16, something like that.

Q: Were there Germans already in your village?

A: Oh yes, the Germans were in the village.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, but I – I walk in civilian clothing, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: And so I stay home, and shortly after, they find me to join the underground.

Q: Fifteenth or sixteenth of October.

A: Well, that was few days later.

Q: Okay, okay. So not a lot of time. I mean –

A: No.

Q: Okay, so how did that happen? Who found you?

A: Well, I know them from **Przemyśl**. They were active – well, they tried to
[indecipherable] high school, you know, the Nationalist party. The organizers, you
know, the Nationalist party. And then the – the governing party, too, we had some –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

they – they get there – they were there before I go – get home. My mother told me that this guy was there asking for me, and that he will be back. So, few days later he came back and – and I joined the underground. First assignment I had, to organize places where those officers and soldiers, Polish soldiers, who wants to get to Polish army, to **France**, and through **Hungary** and **Romania**. Well, **Romania** was under Soviet, you have to go to Soviet occupation, and get to **Romania**, this was impossible. And here was the piece from the Soviet boundary. **San** River was the boundary between Soviet and German oca – occupation. From the **San** River – from the Soviet occupation, the boundary, there was about 20 - 25 kilometers, direct boundary with the **Hungary**, and then was **Slovakia**, further west.

Q: So you had a window of –

A: **Slovakia** –

Q: Okay.

A: **Slovakia** was created by **Hitler**, so we have a good – we were on good term with Slovaks, but they were with **Hitler**, so some of them will – were – was he – were helpful – helpful, but some give the – to Germans. So that was this – this piece where we have direct contact with **Hungary**, although **Hungary** were also with **Germany**. But there were tradition of friendship between **Poland** and **Hungary**. So, we always had good relation with them. And in this case, they also proved that.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: So that they were – so, to get directly – go in **Hungary**, you have to gek – through **Slovakia**, you have to get through two bo – boundaries – two borders.

Q: Okay.

A: – to **Slovakia**, and then slo – from **Slovakia** to **Hungary**.

Q: Okay, but you had **Poland** –

A: Now here is directly.

Q: Direct.

A: Directly to veng – to hunga – to **Hungary**.

Q: So you had a 25 kilometer window –

A: Window.

Q: – basic –

A: Window.

Q: Yeah.

A: And so my job was to find place pa – places in the villages where those people walking there can sleep at night, have lunch or dinner, you know, breakfast and so on. So because I was just about in [indecipherable] way, between **Jaroslaw** and **Przemyśl**, and **Tarnów**, which was the last point when they go across the boundary, so I – I – my father have, you know, some – we got some relatives. So I

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

have several spots, you know, both ways to – where they can stop and s – for night sleep.

Q: So you were able to do this, you were able to find this?

A: Yes, I were able – I was able to do, with my father helps. So – well, I was not the one they want, they got some other people too, because depends that the distances and so on. So that was my first assignment. And then this ended in December, end of December, 1939, because the Gestapo get on the – in **Przemyśl**. But those leaders of this thing were, two of them, they escape. They were simply not home when Gestapo came to pick them up, but couple other people were arrested by the Gestapo. So, in the very is – tough winter 1939, very large snow, several feet of snow was on ta – on the – so – but in – my ples – my parents came Professor **Westfall**(ph) from – I remember his name, even, although I saw him once in my life. He was over 50, and 36 kilometer in this snow rode – he came 36 kilometer walking, because there was no other transportation, to tell me that – to – to – to notify the **Sarnok**(ph), the – the end of that – what happened, and so on. So my job was there to go to **Sarnok**(ph), walk again –

Q: So, in other words, he came to your parents' home to let you know of these arrests by the Gestapo –

A: No, that they were arrested, and we discontinue this.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: Because there – there – the beginning –

Q: Of course.

A: – just to exist, you know.

Q: Okay. So what did – what was –

A: So I have to go to **Sarno**(ph) the – the end of the thing, to notify them what happened.

Q: So he came to tell you to notify others?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: To – so – so he return back same way, my father give it – him ride to some part of – of the road, and hoping that maybe if somebody else give him – and then I walked too. Father gave me some part with – with horse. And then I walked to **Sarnok**(ph) to notify them. Naturally we have code names, and so on, and so –

Q: What was your code name?

A: My – well, my code name was different. I go to someplace, and I said something, you know. But my name is in – in co – I was not **John**, I was not **Krawiec**, I was **Orda**(ph).

Q: **Orda**(ph).

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: **Orda**(ph).

Q: So that was your suda – your nom de guerre?

A: Yes.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And then again, when you go somewhere, you have something special, you have to say something –

Q: A password.

A: Password.

Q: Okay.

A: So I got the password and – to **Sarnok**(ph) and drugstore, and from the drugstore they got – they give me – they – they call the persons I want to.

Q: Okay.

A: So I didn't know the name – real name of the person, or where they live, or anything. So then I – aft – shortly after, they came to conclusion that because the Poles have completely cut off the rest of the world, they were German – allowed to publish newspaper in Polish language, but there was German propaganda. Now the Poles have to turn radios. Our – it just happened that this aristocratic family, thanks to the connection with aristocratic family in **[indecipherable]** they have radio. So I had source of information.

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January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: First a walk for dinner, and turn the radio [**indecipherable**] friends surrounded to **London**. And I go next day to him and I get the information from him, and we publi – I publish bulletin; just sometimes, just one sheet of paper; sometimes two – four pages. Sometimes is two pages, because it was hard to get the paper.

Q: So you –

A: And they got this [**indecipherable**] I don't know what is micro – it was – you got special – not paper, but special plastic something.

Q: Mm-hm, ink.

A: You typed there, on the typewriter, on this instead of paper. And then it was – you put this, and –

Q: Yeah, you – you – you type it up, and then you put paper on it, and – to make copies, is this what it is?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, there was special machines, you know. **Powielac** they called, I don't know what is the English name for that. And so, it was important, because there were completely no radio, no newspapers, and what is going on?

Q: Right. So –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: [indecipherable]

Q: – were you assigned this task, to –

A: I was assigned by the Polish underground. Well, I want it –

Q: Yeah.

A: – you know, to – to begin with.

Q: You're a journalist, yeah.

A: Yeah. I was dreaming to be journalist, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: I started to write [indecipherable]. And so that was – that was not much
journalist because you just copy – you just type the news –

Q: Right.

A: – you know, from radio, and things like that. But anyway, it was something. And
I have couple people helping me from the village there, including my younger
brother, 16 years old. And in August –

Q: So this is going –

A: – the village became quite – well, it was practically impossible. One thing, I lost
tons of information, because the German concentrated army of war against **Soviet**
Union. So the villa in this aristocratic family was taken by the German officers.

Q: Oh, hen –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – and the family – the family had kitchen for children, kitchen and two rooms.

Q: This is the aristocratic family that had connections in **Austria**?

A: They also got radio.

Q: Yeah, got radio.

A: And – so, in next room was German officer, the pastor cannot turn a radio in **London**.

Q: That's right.

A: You know. So I lost [**indecipherable**] information. So I went to **Kraków** to report to my superiors what happened. When I return back, I walk from the – it was – that time there was no buses, all buses, the German liquidated. There – may – I arrived in **Shavas(ph)**, and from **Shavas(ph)** to **Gdynia** was narrow gate trains. And they came at evening, about 10 o'clock, was the train came.

Q: I-I want to interrupt for one minute though – one second. You say from – you were operating this new – little newsletter from January to August, is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: So that would have made it August 1940.

A: 1940, yeah.

Q: Right. And you're saying the Germans were already preparing to attack the **Soviet Union** in August 1940?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: No, started concentrate the army. They attack '41, in June.

Q: That's right, that's right.

A: But you know, millions of soldiers, they cannot bring in one day. They started concentration already in August 1940.

Q: I didn't know that. That's interesting to find out. Okay.

A: Yes. Yes. And there's normal, you know.

Q: Yeah, of course.

A: Millions of soldiers, you cannot bring to the front line in one day.

Q: Right.

A: It takes time now, equipment, ammunition, and so on, and so on.

Q: Okay. That i –

A: So they beg – that's – they started already in August 1940.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. And so, when I return back from **Kraków**, I learn that Gestapo was there to – want talk to me. And – well, I didn't want to talk to them. And my parents n –

Q: You didn't?

A: And my parents knew that too, because when I walked to the door, it was the evening, at night, and when I walked to the door, my father opened the door and says, your things are together in a suitcase, get out.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, well they know what was going on.

Q: Okay.

A: And they were not educated people, but they smart – my mother was – she got seven c-classes of grammar school, so it was much more than most of the people there. And – but they know, you know, what was going on and – and s – so this was beginning of my being runner now, you know. So I get –

Q: Beginning of your living underground, in other words.

A: Underground. So, the organization gave me identification card on different name. From that time on, I became **Jan Sobchuk**(ph), born in **Rodinka**(ph), county of **Stanislavov**(ph), which was under Soviet occupation, so German cannot check that. And I move not too far away, and start again, continue this pu-publication of this bul-bulletin.

Q: So you got another source of information?

A: Not – another s-source of information, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: I got another source of information, plus once in a ewa – once in a while I get from **Warsaw** a courier, some lady, usually a woman came with some blo – newspapers publishing in **Warsaw**, so give me viewpoints – wider viewpoint on

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

situation. And I got friends from military not far away, who had this source of information. They hide a radio, and they also has little bulletin for the local consume – consumption. So I was that – then I get sick, so I stopped that. They took over, those friends of mine, and when I get back to help, I decided to join the guerilla units. I got military sar – military background, and so I went to **Warsaw** to report that –

Q: When you say you get back to health, what does that mean?

A: I was sick for – I get beginning of tuberculosis. And so it was long – a long time before I get back to normal.

Q: And did you – were you publishing that little – that newspaper, what you were writing while you were sick?

A: No, no.

Q: No. Okay, okay. And where were you living?

A: I was living not too far, in the village.

Q: In the village.

A: In the village, not too far from my village.

Q: Okay.

A: About three – you know, the people were very friendly. Can depend on the people in the villages –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: – at least in this part of **Poland**, southern part. Yo-You didn – didn't have to know them, you can tell where cases that the guerrillas left – had somebody wounded, and yet run away from the forest, and leave the wounded somewhere, and they cannot stay with, or carry him, because daytime, and the Germans were –

Q: Looking, yeah.

A: – searching, you know. So they leave somewhere in the village. They were sure that person will be there when they came next day to pick him up.

Q: So that meant that nobody would betray this person.

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No, it was – this – as far as this part is concerned, we were really amazing people. There were some traitors, like everywhere. You always have some black sheeps, and that.

Q: So tell me about when you decided to join the guerrilla – guerrilla activities, what did that involve?

A: Well – well – well – well they – I get a week, you know, to go and say goodbye to my parents in **France** and so on [**inaudible**]. So I went, get to **Jaroslaw** where I have friend and in this friend, I stay there for days, and I have my belongings there,

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

and his wife wash my shir-shirts, and so on. So – and there was my station, you know. And so – so I get to there and I – morning, I – his wife should go to my parents, make arrangements when and where we can meet, and i-in meantime, I decided to go to **Przemyśl**, it was just about a kilometer, and to say goodbye to my first love, you know. And I didn't get there.

Q: You didn't get there?

A: No. I get on the station, and waiting in line to get to ticket, this 30 kilometer, you know, to **Przemyśl**, and get the ticket, and suddenly I felt some heavy arm on my shir – shoulders here. I look; two Ges-Gestapo guys grab my arms, put handcuffs, hit me in the face from one side, from the other side. I supposed to keep balance, you know, from both side I get, and kick me, and walk me out. And I know ya – I know **Jaroslaw**, I was in military, very small town. At that time it was not even 20,000 people. And they took over apartment building opened just before the war in '38, I believe. And they kick out all the tenants and owners, and took this over, and they have offices there. They walk me there to basement, and you know, each tenant had the space in the basement, storage room, you know.

Q: That's right.

A: So, because they got, for winter the coal, there's some – some fruits for winter.

They prepare in **Poland**, you know, for winter. So th – each one has a storage room.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

So they change those storage, the – the wooden walls they make concrete walls, concrete floors, steel door, and make cells. They walk me into one of those cells. There was a hook in the ceiling. They took the – took the handcuffs off, and tied my arms in the back with – with rope, and put this over this hook, pulling me up so I was hanging on my arms in the back, not touching floor.

Q: Oh my gosh.

A: Yeah. It was painful, believe me. And they walk f – they went to lunch, because it was the lunchtime. So that was – when they ge –

Q: So you were hung like a piece of meat.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Not touching floor. It was painful. You know, I had the –

Q: Your arms like that?

A: – arms like that, yeah, and the time goes on, you know, it was painful.

Q: Your arm – your sockets – arm sockets and so –

A: Yeah, yeah. So when they came back – I don't know how long time – how long time – how long they were, and took me down, I was half conscious. So they put the handcuffs back in my – my arms in handcuffs in the back, and walk me upstairs, and th – we got instruction from the underground, that if you speak – understand Germans, don't say. They have to give you interpreter, so I will have little time to

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

figure out the lie, a good lie, you know. And so this is what happened. I had German in s – in high school.

Q: So you understood.

A: So I understood. I said no, so they give interpreter. And besides that, and this guy who – it happened it was deputy chief of the Gestapo who handled my case. He got somebody to help him. So they all were armed with wooden stick. I was sitting on floor, handcuffs in the back, sitting on floor, and they were helping me answer –

Q: The questions.

A: – the questions, helping me, you know, beating my back, anyplace that, you know –

Q: They could find.

A: – they wanted, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And that was going on from lunchtime until dark. That was May 22nd, so the day is long.

Q: Nineteen fo – 1941?

A: Three.

Q: Oh, 1943.

A: Forty-three, yes, because I was on the go, I was sick, I – so I – so that's 1943.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay, so you had been really in the underground for – for three years.

A: Just about, yeah.

Q: Three years, yeah. A long time.

A: So finally they change it up for dinner, somebody else came.

Q: They changed shifts.

A: Shifts, you know, but I was just all the time sitting on floor –

Q: What were they asking you?

A: They asking many questions, and among those questions came one quite often, **Sarzyna. Sarzyna**, I know it is a village, a railroad station for local trains, not far away from this, about three – third or fourth station from this town **Jaroslaw**. So this is all what I know, nothing else. But quite often this **Sarzyna** came.

Q: Did they know your real name?

A: No, I – I have false – I di – they got my **I.D.**, ja – **Jan Sobchuk**(ph), born in – under Soviet occupation that – well now they occupied this territory, so they can check that. So it was – don't cover me any more. So and I don't know what time it was, but it was dark already, May 22nd, so day is long. When he hit me here on the right side, on this right side of the head.

Q: [**indecipherable**] head.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: And I faint, first time in my life. So they dump some cold water on my face, keep me in – drag me down to the same cell I was hanged before, and threw me into cell.

Q: Did they string you up again?

A: No, just –

Q: They just left you there.

A: – took – just threw me in so I fell down floor, was concrete floor, and I don't know, I sleep, or I was lo-losing consciousness because I was waking up, and down. You know, I – I don't know what happened. All day next, I remember just that I was – sometimes I wa – a – awake.

Q: Okay.

A: And I feel thirsty, I was thirsty, not hungry, but thirsty. And so na – night again, and next day brought – brought me breakfast. And after breakfast they walk me upstairs to the same room I was there interrogation, same people. And – but they don't – before, they don't ask me even to sit down on floor, like this you – you get to the – and some military sergeant from milit – German military walk, and look at me and told no. So I don't know what was going on. And after that, they took me back down to the same cell, and shortly after, four other prisoners, they brought

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

four prisoners. And one of them was in much worse shape than I was, you know, beat and wounds, broken. Back he had broken like – he had cut across –

Q: His back.

A: – the muscle, you know. And that was – that was – he was in pain because that was infected. So all the time – fi-fi-finally it broke out, so he got little relief for day or so, and it t-turn over again. And so he walk in and he says pardon me

[indecipherable] you know, you re – you remind me somebody.

Q: This man who had been so tortured –

A: Beaten and tortured.

Q: – beaten. Okay.

A: But he says, we cannot – I cannot talk because this guy at the door, he is with them. So, when they took this guy to deliver food in – to prisoners, you know, in other cells, he told me, you remind – you look like Polish ranger from **Sarzyna** who two or three weeks before, shoot and kill the deputy chief of the Gestapo, in **Jarowślaw**, from **Jarowślaw**. District of **Jarowślaw**. So that was the explanation. I just look – happened to look like this guy who shoot this chief of the gest – this is the reason they torture me so badly, because they thought that I am the guy who killed deputy chief of the Gestapo, you know.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: And so this – this man who had been so tortured, thought that y – do you think he has been the one who identified you?

A: No.

Q: No. Okay.

A: No, no, he don't even identify me. He told me just that I look like –

Q: Got it.

A: – like him, you know.

Q: I understand now. I understand.

A: And now – so I know that, and the – just that they're saying – next day or so, we were in the cell, and we hear beating somebody – somebody c-crying, you know.

Q: Sc – right, screaming.

A: – and screaming, and they dragged somebody – and across our cell, was – was storage, empty storage for coal for winter.

Q: Right.

A: So in June it was empty. So they drag him there, and they were pounding him there, and he is screaming; his moan, it was weaker and weaker. So finally they drag him out. And shortly after, that was si-six o'clock, or seven o'clock, they bring us something to eat. So this guy went to deliver the food, and when the Gestapo guy

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

opened the door, he was sweat, and says this: he was strong Pole. He got 300 lashes, and he is still alive. So this is all what – how – how they counted, I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: But anyway – but next morning this guy went to deliver breakfast, and he said that when he return that he help get the body out, he died during the night, this guy. So after that – you know, I got here false identification. Now they will check, because they occupy this territory. So next problem is [indecipherable] next day they call me up. And again, sitting on the floor, pounding. He threw this identification card in my face, and he says [indecipherable] who are you? And again, we had story with my family and my friends and my relatives, that I dated some girl, and father don't like that. And we quarrel with father on that. And one day after quarrel I pick up my things and I walk away.

Q: Okay.

A: They don't know what happened to. So I told this story – oh I – they did check later, but probably they didn't believe it, because they keep me there, and ev – I went through about four interrogation, or five. And the new prisoners, they walk in, they ask sa – they got my picture, they took my – they didn't get my pictures, I was again instruction, if we'll got pictures, get away. And shortly before I – I – I was arrested, I took all the pictures, including the pictures wi-with my diploma,

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

graduation from high school. Matura, you know [indecipherable] with the picture.

I took this away to some relatives far away. So they didn't had any pictures, but they make pictures, and they sh – there's – new prisoners walk in, and – and I – and they tell me, oh – because [indecipherable]

Q: Who is this?

A: – they show me your pictures, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: – I know you. Well, nobody there – from them knew me, because I was not working in this territory, I was little further away.

Q: Okay.

A: So nobody knew me from the underground in this part of the town – of the county.

Q: Okay. So –

A: So this is –

Q: I have a – I have a – a question that I want to clear up. When you said you already had a story made up, of you – a story made up that you had quarreled with your father because of a girl –

A: Yeah, yeah.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: – and you said they go to check that story. Do they go to check that with your real father?

A: Yes.

Q: So then –

A: I didn't know about that, I learned that about the war –

Q: Okay.

A: – when – when we were finding –

Q: You learned that much later. Much, much –

A: Yes, I learned that much later, that when **[indecipherable]**

Q: So then they knew your – they knew your real name by that point?

A: Well, I have to tell them.

Q: Okay.

A: I have to tell them this is the reason.

Q: This is the reason I have a pseudonym, and this is my real name, and this is –
okay, okay.

A: **[indecipherable]** he throw this false thi – who are you?

Q: Okay.

A: Because they know already that this is false identification.

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Got it. And so your – your – your job is to be able to say, the reason I have false identification has nothing to do with underground.

A: No.

Q: It has to do with a girl.

A: What you did for living. Black market. It was concentration camp from black market.

Q: Okay.

A: Now, where you sleep last night – because they arrested me in st – railroad station before noon.

Q: Okay.

A: And a woman [**indecipherable**] and the interpreter, who was German from **Jaroslaw**, and he knew – he told him, don't try it. It is a Polish culture to protect women, especially in situation like sh-she is his lover, not wife or – or – and so you won't get anything from him, because this is a Polish culture, and he won't tell.

Q: He won't – he won't tell you about the woman, yeah.

A: Tell you about the woman, a-address and and so on, you know [**indecipherable**]

Q: Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – you know, was – life was really – they say the – this Chinese curse bids you to live in an interesting time, and I did. And not just an interesting, but very dangerous, even.

Q: Yes. So you say you were interrogated four times?

A: Four or five times, I don't recall now. And the last time they send me to jail in **Tarnów**. Well, first to j – to jail over there, by the cour – by the new court building, in basement. There were about five or six of us, and we were there for about a week.

Q: Okay.

A: And that was a cell in the basement, no nothing, just concrete and brick, only small light – electric light in the corner. And there were some fellows from **Jaroslów**, and they – they know and they tell you s – you know what? We are in death cell. Death cell. Before the war, those sentenced to death spend their last days of their **[indecipherable]** in this cell. But there was the – th – it was not a big jail, it was just jail by the sa – court. So it was – Ukrainian was – fellow was the guard, you know. And to our surprise, next morning, you know, early in the morning – we didn't know what time because we don't have even window, you know, to see –

Q: Right.

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – was dark or not. So you open the door, and walk us on the yard. There was a pump, and si – no, water.

Q: Okay.

A: So we grabbed to wash ourselves, you know, little, and so on, have some fresh air. And he was watching if the Gestapo does not come. Ukrainian fellow, you know. And this happened for a week. So if somebody – I know the Ukrainians were bandits and so on, but – they murdered many people. But they were not – not all –

Q: Yeah.

A: – that is – always – generalization is always wrong.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And here was a Ukrainian fellow –

Q: Who was allowing you to get some air and some –

A: Air and wash, and he watch if the Gestapo is not coming. And in our – in his signal we should – supposed to run fast back down to cells, and he will walk like the doors, and everything be fine.

Q: How long did you stay there?

A: And – I don't know, about a week or so. And then the jail in Tarnów.

Q: Okay.

A: I spend there, I don't know, five, six weeks, seven weeks.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: So they didn't let you go?

A: No.

Q: Even though – even –

A: No, no.

Q: Okay.

A: And – but interesting story was on the way from the – one day, they came – the Gestapo came and they handcuff my left arm with right arm another fellow, another prisoner, and there was six of us, I think. Yeah. Three pairs, and one woman. And the woman was wife of this ranger who shoot and killed this deputy chief of the Gestapo.

Q: Wow.

A: She was arrested, and she was there. And so she was very attractive woman, as a matter of fact. And so naturally the Gestapo guy we-were, you know, talking to her, and so on.

Q: Did they know of her connection?

A: Well, they arrested her in the home. He – they came to arrested him, and he was not home.

Q: So they took her.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – r-ranger [**indecipherable**] ranger, he was in the forest. And he was coming back for lunch, and he – they just get married about week ago, and so she was with her mother at home. And the Gestapo came to arrest him. He was not home, so they – they searched the house. They went upstairs, there were a couple room upstairs. So they – one room was locked, the door were locked. So they came down to get keys. She said, I don't know. I'm here just few days, I don't know what is there – where are the keys. So they break the doors, and here was the arsenal of guns, ammunition and so on. What happened? Not too far away [**indecipherable**] was – before the war, they built – Polish government start to build – it's supposed to be factory of dynamite you know, any things like that. They didn't finish that, but there were some already building ready – some building were even built, and there was part of forest, you know, surrounded by barbed wires fence, and because it – it would be material –

Q: Right.

A: So the Germans decided to use this facility for the ammunition and arm they get on the Soviet front. It was not far from the Soviet border. So, Soviet front. So they were bringing all the ammunition and guns, whatever they get that, over there. They got the military units, and they got this Polish – this – there was ye – before the war they had young teenagers, at least 16 or 17 years old, they had about two years or

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

three years. They were e-even un-uni – uniform. It – in wintertime, they got schools, you know. If they – somebody didn't finish grammar school, or had some grammar, first years of high school, things like that, they had – on summer months they work on some – building roads, or something like that. So they had this unit, Polish boys, and they were – among them, there were Poles who were, you know, in some ranks. One of them was from this village, and he was like corporal. And one – he was from the – from **Baltic** Sea, territory which were, before the war, in **Germany**; par – then was part of **Poland**, and he speak very well Germans, and he was like one a – one rank higher.

Q: Okay.

A: That is important because – it came later. And so, this ranger nearby, yes, he was also speaking very well Germans, so he got friendly with the German military, which surrendered that, and – and at the gates, you know, everybody walk in and out, they search, and you get – you can get in, you know, you got special permit, and things like that. So but here, part of the li – forest there, so he got – they let him go, he brought some whiskey, so they drink together, and so on. So he walk in and out. And he carry – and because you never know what kind of weather you're gonna have. You can have rain. So he got some blankets, you know **[indecipherable]** on the arms, some coat or something, with rubbers.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Mm-hm, raincoat.

A: Yeah, raincoat. And so **[indecipherable]** so he could carry – and under his thing he carry, you know, stuff out from – through there.

Q: Oh, so he would carry ammunition out through his raincoat.

A: Under – under –

Q: Dur – under the raincoat.

A: Raincoat.

Q: Okay.

A: And loaded there, and this went to –

Q: To the house?

A: And here is – and here is the story – it could be film.

Q: Okay.

A: Lived not far away, in little town, the Gestapo arrested – one of the Polish underground was arrested, and break down, and give up name of some 10 or 12 people. Some of them were in – he should – normally, he would not know, really.

Q: Right.

A: Because there were three or five, no more –

Q: Right.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – groups. But he sup – he thinks that oh, some others, oh, some belong. So 10 or 12 people were arrested, and put in jail in this town, small town. And the jail – the guards were Ukrainian nationals, working together with Germans. And the underground [**indecipherable**] about it, lived not far away, and they decided in first action to te – tonight get them out. If they don't take them for night, get them out from jail. Because if they take – take them to **Rzeszów** [**indecipherable**] where is military and the Gestapo, and German police and so on, is impossible. But here they can do it, because they got only this Ukrainian guards. And so they get this – get those Ukrainians lock in one of the cells, get all these prisoners out. And they get death sentence for this guy who give the names of all others. So they get him out of the jail, near forest, and shoot him. And this moment, alarm from **Rzeszów**, cars are going. That was night. So, no Poles have a car – car, so they knew it was Germans. So, alarm, and they ran into forest with the prisoners, and this guy was left there. And it just happened he was not killed, he was – he lost conscious – consciousness, but was still alive. And when the Germ – Gestapo arrived, find out what happened, and find him, they put him in car, rush him to **Rzeszów**, and to hospital, and get somebody there of their own people to stay with him, and tell doctor to get him par – do everything possible to get him for – back consciousness, you know. So they want to ask him who did, because he knew.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: Probably. So this is what happened. And this guy, before he lost – he gained consciousness for a moment, and they ask him who, and he says one word, **Miaska**(ph). Well, they know that the ammunition was lost in this action, was Russian ammunition. And this Russian ammunition is this – in this camp, which belonged to Gestapo **Bialystok**. This is Gestapo **Rzeszów**. So they contact **Jaroslaw** that from this camp just – was just ammunition here, so you got somebody who carry out this ammunition to Polish underground. So – and they got **Miaska**(ph). So get [indecipherable] in **Jaroslaw**, get to the camp, to this camp where this ammunition and so on. And here they look the list of this Polish workers there, and here is Corporal **Miaska**(ph). So they arrested him. But they get him back, and when the Gestapo raise hands, he grab on knees, and cry and tell them everything what they – what he knew, what he think, and everything else. So they came to conclusion that this can't be this guy, you know, leader of the underground group –

Q: Cause he talks too much.

A: He was afraid – scared, you know. I know ye – I was with him in cell for several weeks later. So they came to conclusion that it can be something wrong, but he has a brother, older brother, who was in cadet school for reserve officers in Polish army.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

So they came to conclusion that this – his brother was the commander of the unit with – who get this –

Q: Ammunit –

A: – ar-arrested out. So they went to arrest brother, but brother was not at home already. He knew what happen and what can happen, so he ran away. But the – they keep this guy. But he give – about 10 or 12 people were arrested because of him. One of them was this **Antic**(ph), this guy who told me when I was arrested, when he walked in the cell, that he – that he – I remind him somebody – you know.

Q: Right.

A: So one of them was arrested. He was this – one rank higher than this **Jazga**(ph). And so he was beaten – he was shoot few days later. They took him in morning to – to – early –

Q: And then shot him.

A: Shot him, yeah. And so this is the way, you know, things – because we're nice film, interesting film, to g-go all those ways, to get –

Q: So you – yeah, so you're talking – you eventually are taken to prison where the wife of the ranger who actually shot – the ranger who shot the vice-deputy of the gesta –

A: No, I was taken as a ranger.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: Because I look like ranger.

Q: Okay.

A: And his wife was arrested, and she was in different ce-cell, but we get together – I – I happened to notice [**indecipherable**] when they took us all on railroad station, we waited – wait for train to go to **Tarnów**, to [**indecipherable**] in **Tarnów**.

Q: Okay.

A: And here – we are waiting in train, and here came my cousin's wife, my cousin from **Gdynia**, came out, he was name **Krawiec** and also profession **Krawiec**, he was good ka – ka – tailor –

Q: Okay.

A: – in **Gdynia**. But he was kick out when they took over **Gdynia**.

Q: That means when everybody was emptied out from **Gdynia**, when everybody was forced to leave –

A: Yes, the Poles were kick out and the Germans were settled there.

Q: Okay.

A: And so he lef – he get apartment in **Jaroslów**, in some – in the – three or four floors building, he was on second or third floor, across the railroad station in **Jaroslów**. So, his wife saw – he was downstairs, pick up something, and he – she

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

saw when they walk us to the station from Gestapo. And she ran up to my brother, my brother was there to bring parcels for me, in the Gestapo. We – we can get parcels, but we get only personal belongings. Food and everything else was for all per – per – persons, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: A-All p-prisoners.

Q: Okay.

A: And so – so they walk on the station, because he was going home two station, and then to pick up the narrow – narrow gate train to home. And they walk sta – toward me. And I asked the Gestapo, that is my brother, can I – and this woman, you know, she told him – she speak – she was good in German, she, oh let him, young, we – you see a little boy he is – so he –

Q: He said okay.

A: Okay. So my brother, my as – this cou – cousin's wife stay away, but ma – my brother came. He was 12 years old at that time. And he was coming, he saw me, you know, with the handcuffs, and I was all – I was white, you know, all summer in basement, and tortures and so on, and not – malnutrition and skinny. So he come in and he [indecipherable] sees, he just – he crying. I told him, **Zbyszek**(ph), don't cry. And he –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Oh, and he tries not to.

A: He didn't, he didn't, he –

Q: He didn't.

A: No, he didn't. And then the train arrive, and she [**indecipherable**] I can stay – go just to **Przemyśl**, two station. So he got out, so the brother, my brother sitting on – across from me, and I was on this side on – across me, two station. And then in **Przemyśl** he have to go. So he get out – the pr – train stop, he get out. A lot of people were waiting on train. And he jump out. And later, after the war he told me that when he jump out, they tau – they saw, Gestapo through the window, you know, the hats and so on. So they thou – they thought that he escape. So they run around him, you know, s-so – to protect him. The people on the station, you know, waiting for trains.

Q: So they were – they were – they saw the Gestapo, and they were trying to protect your brother.

A: Yeah, they saw it – they saw through the window, you know, Gestapo guys, with hats.

Q: Right.

A: And so when he jump from this doors, you know, they thought that he escape.

Q: That he's a prisoner who's escaping as well.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: He escape, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And so it –

Q: Talk about solidarity.

A: Oh yes, yeah. That was –

Q: But you see, I want to understand. You were telling me the story of the people who were released from this prison, because somebody had given their names, and I didn't understand the significance of the story. I thought it was connected to the wife of the man who shot that Gestapo person, because they found munitions upstairs in – in – in his house, when they broke down the locked door.

A: Yeah.

Q: And so you were telling me – was the significance that – that those munitions had been brought – you know, stolen from these depots where – where – where they were located by the underground, and that was –

A: No –

Q: No.

A: – it was stolen from the depot these were Germans brought it.

Q: I know, I know – no, I know, I know, were Germans.

A: And this – this ranger, he steal those things, carry under this –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Raincoat.

A: – raincoat –

Q: Okay.

A: – you know.

Q: And his name was **Miaska**(ph)?

A: No, his name was – I don't remember. I don't know his name.

Q: It wasn't that one. Okay.

A: **Miaska**(ph), it was one of this – he was a corporal –

Q: Okay.

A: – in this camp, in the war [**indecipherable**] you know, this – and his brother –

Q: Was underground.

A: – was – was the leader of the group of the underground, of the guerilla unit,
which freed those prisoners.

Q: Okay.

A: His brother.

Q: Got it. Got it. So where were you taken?

A: I was taken to **Tarnów**, to [**indecipherable**] in **Tarnów**, and I spend there a few
weeks. And then, from **Tarnów**, they took me to **Auschwitz**. And that was a
interesting stories, too. We get from cells, in the hole in the jail, a large jail, built

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

be-between the wars by Polish government. And it was a whole [indecipherable] from cells, to several – three, four story building. They were bringing one, two, you know, prisoners and we stay at that. And here I met some friends, who were, you know, in those cells, you know. We don't see each other for years, you know, some of them.

Q: And there you are, yeah.

A: And – and then we – they took us to the railroad station, and we get to **Tarnów**. And in **Tarnów** – from **Tarnów** to – to **Auschwitz-Birkenau**. I get to **Auschwitz-Birkenau; Auschwitz zwei – Auschwitz II-Birkenau**.

Q: I want to – before we go there, I want to understand. So the Germans didn't release you, but it doesn't sound like they had any evidence against you.

A: They don't need.

Q: Okay.

A: There were mass execution of Poles. There were execution, for example, first mass exe-execution was in Christmas day, 1939, in **Wawver(ph)**, near **Warsaw**. Day before, at evening, in a tavern, criminals, Polish – for murder, I don't know for what he was in jail, but when war break out, and the – and Polish army withdrew from the town, they opened the jail because they didn't want to leave people locked in – in jail, you know. So – so – and the Germans announce that all those who were

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

freed have to return back – report back to jail. Well, he didn't. And he was in the tavern, and they got – some of them, they got pictures, you know. He must be some murderer or something, because those big criminals, they have pictures. And they have the pictures s-somewhere, and he was in the tavern, and German policemen walk in and no – and recognize him.

Q: Okay.

A: And want to arrest him. And this guy was armed, and killed the po – German policeman. Well – **[phone ringing]**

Q: Okay **[break]** Okay, so you were talking that you were transported to **Auschwitz-Birkenau.**

A: Yeah.

Q: But before we get there, I want – oh, and then you were telling me about mass executions of Poles –

A: Yeah.

Q: – and that a Polish criminal had shot a policeman.

A: Yeah, and next – next morning, they came to the town, get all people – small town, it was some – at that time, it was, I don't know, fi – 1500 of people or something. Suburb of **Warsaw** – building, it was new one. And get out, and pick up hundred young men, and in front of the family, they shoot them, as a revenge for

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

this one German was killed by Pole. And that happened in many other instances, like that.

Q: So you're saying it didn't matter that they had no evidence against you.

A: Oh no, there was no need of evidence. They pick up people in train, for example.

I was couple times, but my false identification helped me. And false identification that I worked somewhere there. In **Radom**, about 10 o'clock at evening, the train from **Warsaw** to **Kraków**, and I was in the train. The train stop in **Radom**, the both sides of the tr-tracks were policemen, the Polish blue policemen, and German policemen, and the Gestapo line up on both side, all people out. And they walked through the wag – the cars, and make sure that everybody get out. And they walk us to some school, on outskirts of the town, and next day they have Gestapo, and somebody else they got, they check and they release those who are working in the town, because **Radom** has factories, armament factories, so the – many people work before the war, so the Germans naturally used that – worked there. So the – and then – well, I was hesitated what to do, I was not sure if my identification card will be good enough, you know. So, there were people as – still some people left. And there was one Polish woman who was – she claimed that – well, they pe – they – she is prostitute, she got – she got the, you know, card that she is prostitute. Well, she got [**indecipherable**] she got child. Her husband is in – in – in camp, you know,

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

prisoners of war camp. And so – well, by evening I came to conclusion that I have to – cause there was a Polish policeman, this blue policeman also sit – standing in the – there was like a hall on the other side, was a room on both side of the rooms. I was in one room, and the – in the middle they got like desk, and there was G-G-German – Gestapo and so on. There was the Germans – Gestapo, and also the Polish priest. And so I talked to her, I gived her some money, and that's so she will go to – get to this German policeman, this Gestapo guy, get with him and nice –

Q: Friendly, mm-hm.

A: – friendly. And in meantime, I ran out of the room. I know this Polish policeman wouldn't – so, naturally they opened the door, was slide from the room, in the dark, on the out. So naturally I didn't walk –

Q: Right.

A: – around straight, but to the side so that they won't see me. They shoot, but then I jump at the fence and get – but there was poli – eight o'clock, police hour.

Nobody can be on street.

Q: Curfew, yeah.

A: You know. So – and I hear from the corner the policemen, two policemen arrive far – not close, but far away already, walk on the street. So, it was restaurant, so in night the door around to thi – this restaurant, but it was locked. But I got – I was –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

and door open, and was woman. Polish woman, Polish restaurant. And she opened the door and –

Q: Let you in.

A: Yes, first in, you know, close the door. And so she said, I hope that they won't – they don't see me, or –

Q: Right.

A: – walking in, or something, because they were shooting, but nobody follow me –

Q: Right.

A: – because I disappear in darkness, and I turn, you know, street into another street, and – and so they were having a dinner, full dinner [**indecipherable**] They have another English name.

Q: But – but why were these people taken from the train in **Radom**? Why – was it just a – a random –

A: They just – that was – those who were working for important ni – German industry, were release of orders, went. Those not educated went to work on farm, or in the factories in **Germany**. Educated usually to concentration camp.

Q: I see. So you're saying it was all random.

A: All random.

Q: Random.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: There was no – you don't have to be anybody, that you can be anybody if you – educated people were sure concentration camp.

Q: Now, one question I didn't ask before; during the three years you were in the underground –

A: Yeah.

Q: What did you see of what was going on with the Jews?

A: Well, I see ghettos.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, at the beginning, first was – here I got some interesting point. When I started this bu – bulletin, to post the bulletin, well, it was problem to get paper – news – regular paper, type – typewritten paper, you know, for – for this. And so I went to **Rzeszów**, I had friend in the village, across to **Rzeszów**, the town over 20,000 people. And I says, well, I need – **Przemyśl** was closer, but **Przemyśl** the more – majority of the town, and this old town, and the business town part of the town was under Soviet occupation, and the German occupation was smaller and more just residential part. So only **Rzeszów** was there. So [indecipherable] and we went to **Rzeszów**, and to – because he was in high school in **Rzeszów**, so to the store, where he bought, when he was in high school, you know, par – papers and pencils and whatever he needed.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Mm-hm, supplies.

A: And that was a ze – Jewish store –

Q: Okay.

A: – Jew owner sa – Jew owned the store. So we went to him, and so I pick up – I have my bicycle, I cannot so – allow too much, but I pick up two or three, so I can put on so – like without di – giving me trouble –

Q: Right.

A: – using balance. I pick up, and I want pay, and this Jewish fellow says, I think I know for what is that, I won't take money. Yeah, honestly. And I get from him later, they close him, the store. So he carries some the stuff to – back. So before they lock the ba – ghetto, so we walk – I walk with my friend to him, he got in the back, in his kitchen. And so I always get how – how long he had something, I get the paper without money. He didn't took money.

Q: And what happened to him? Do you know?

A: Well, he was in ghetto. I suppose they all get killed.

Q: Mm-hm. Did your activities ever take you into the ghetto? Did you have any assignments?

A: No, you can't get into ghetto if you don't ga – have special permission.

Q: Mm-hm. Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: You have special permission. Is **Irene Sendler** –

Q: Yes, the name, yeah.

A: – na – you know, you – familiar name. About 2500 children she – with her friends, carry out. But she has permission. She was working in the city as a social worker and nurse, I think. And I think she got permission to check if they don't have somethi – typhus or any – some diseases.

Q: Diseases.

A: The Germans were very afraid of contagious di-diseases, to spread.

Q: So did bu-but you never got any assignments from the underground –

A: No.

Q: – that would – no.

A: No assignment, what can we have, assignment in the un – in ghetto? What can we do?

Q: Food? No. No.

A: That – this – food, that is have to be carry through the – through the –

Q: Through the –

A: That was a special units, if they can handle that.

Q: When you're in a guerilla unit, it's a different story then.

A: Well, I – I want to be, I was not, because I was arrested before I get there.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Got it, got it. So – so you saw the – you saw how Jews were in ghettos?

A: Oh yes. We know what was going on because we got the information, for example, from those people who got permit to go there. They – they get out, and in underground press, information about – there were some pictures of children dying on street, especially in wintertime. Frost and not dressed w-warm, and so on. So we know the condition in the ghetto very well. But it – it was locked, and it was surrounded by wall, and barbed wires on top of the brick wall.

Q: Which ghettos did you see, from which towns?

A: Well, from **Warsaw**.

Q: Oh, you saw the **Warsaw** ghetto?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, I was quite often in **Warsaw** because the underground business take me there, and – and I was in different – I stay always – most of the time in different places, because – to – so the – the – they don't follow us.

Q: Mm-hm. What about Soviet activity? Did you hear much of what was going on in the Soviet part of **Poland**?

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: We know very well what was going on during ocup – occupation, because in spite of all this security the Soviets have, we still have some Poles who sneak through and get on the German side. So we knew very well.

Q: Okay.

A: Matter of fact, I myself, with special assignment, I cross the river at night on the other side, and I was lucky to get through and get to whom they send me. And then, two or three days later, get back on the German side.

Q: So you crossed the river **San**?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. What kind of assignment was that?

A: That was dealing with espionage.

Q: But is – can you tell me any details?

A: Well, by – you know, as I said, I was a little devil, so I didn't – in this underground, wint – well, that was December – yeah, December 1939. Before – before I start this ne – bu-bulletin, I was in **Przemysł** with – he was second in command in the underground, is from army in this county. And it just happens that his younger sister, my – was my first love.

Q: The one that you had wanted to say goodbye to.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Yes. And so I – I was there in December, and he introduced me – it was a major from **Rzeszów**, introduced me ma – Major **Ruskaivich**(ph) was his name, **Stanley**, from **Rzeszów**. And Major **Ruskaivich**(ph) has a unit – has espionage unit, besides the Polish underground, independent from this. Well, he told me it is the Polish underground corps, and the espionage cooperating with British. And the British agent who is in charge of all that, he's on the Soviet side in **Przemyśl**, under condition that he share with Soviets, the information, you know. So fine, because they know that we were strongly anti-communist, anti-Soviet. So he know he was afraid – so – and he need me. And so I started to be part of this espionage business, in between, between – before I started to publish the paper, again, and so on. And so I have some friends from military, various parts. So I traveled to them – he got money, so – I need money to live, so that was a good set-up for me, because I get money to live.

Q: So anyway, this **Ruskaivich**(ph) would send you to the Soviet part –

A: No, no, no, at –

Q: No, no.

A: – he – I join his espionage –

Q: Right.

A: – organization.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Right.

A: And so I was important for him, because I got some friends from military, young fellows, here and there, various places, and – for example, in **Stalowa Wola**, this was new factory, near town built ar-around – around military factories producing armaments, and – and so on. So, I get money to travel to those fa – fellows. Then I pick up the information from him, and once a month we get together. He lived with her sister in **Rzeszów**, and we sit together.

Q: And you talked to him.

A: No, not talk, we – we put in – how you call that?

Q: In sa – in code?

A: In code.

Q: You put the information in –

A: – put all this information in code.

Q: – information in code, okay.

A: And then, I don't know, he deliver somewhere, and somebody deliver on the other side.

Q: You mean to the sov – to the Soviet side.

A: To the – of this major – British major –

Q: Oh.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – you know. That was –

Q: So in other words, you were ca – you were collecting information for the British, but they were sharing it with the Soviets.

A: This is what he – what – that is what is – was the story, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: And here, that was few months in May, I think – yes, in May. I came to **Rzeszów**, because it was time, you know, that we get together and put the –

Q: Code?

A: – in code – code the – all the information. He was not in, sh – his sister said he went to **Kraków**, and he's supposed to be today, but he did not show up, he not came yet. So next day I came and she says, I worry, because usually if he don't come, or if he come late, he will always give me through some of our information that he will be late. So next day he didn't come, and she come – oh, but there was girl from **Kraków**, courier, that he was arrested in **Kraków**. And situation is bad because they found he was – some dollars on him, and something else. So – but now some other people, you know, brought the material and we should caught that and send this somewhere. So – and she got all this material. So I said, well, I will sit down, I will code that, and I will carry it off to his deputy in **Przemyśl**, this officer in **Przemyśl**, brother of my first love, so I will go there with – very happy to go

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

there. And so I did that. I dunno where to put that. So I get to **Przemysł**, or to him, and he says, well, yeah, I know where we have to go together. So we went outside of the town and in a little – little field – a road a-among farms, you know, not regular road. And was little bridge, and there was a hole in – on – on – on middle of the bridge, and th – we put that in some – line up in cardboard paper, into – just brown paper, and put this [**indecipherable**]. So, okay. And few days later, we – I went to check, and was still there. Nobody pick up. So I came back to him, and I says, well? He says, then we have to go across this river to contact them and so on. And he – his wife returned shortly before, they got little baby, little boy few months old. And I know how happy she – he was, you know, carry this – playing with this. So I said – little devil, you know – I will go. Because I –

Q: He has a child.

A: – I know that he – he was not anxious to go.

Q: Yeah.

A: But he make – one thing I – later, I have against him. He didn't tell me the true. And so I pick up all this stuff, put myself here on the neck, and – because I have to walk across the river, and I know the river in this place because I was in high school so many places I swam, so I know. And you cannot go where that was narrow, wa – th-th-the water was low, so the pe-people – people walk, or even wagons, you

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

know, go across, because the – because that was the very strongly, by the police, you know, because they didn't know that people walk there.

Q: Okay.

A: So I have to go somewhere they don't –

Q: Where they're not guarding it so much.

A: – not guarding so much, because there is no – so I know there was up to here water.

Q: Okay.

A: So – and I didn't know that in the meantime, in mountains, there was very rain. And I walked into it, and I get right – right here. The water was much higher, so I have to swim. Luck – good thing that I knows how to swim. So I swim across, and that carry me quite further down.

Q: Okay.

A: And here, I got from him, coat. You know, when I get on the other side, to get to crosses the first guard – Soviet guard, I have to tell him, you know, this coat, or whatever it was. And now Soviet guard. So, I – loud, I start to – loud, you know, call. And I get on the road, and car appear. Well, it was good car with **NKWD** –

KGB and other s –

Q: **NKVD**.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: **NKVD**, yeah. So they grabbed me, you know, I was wet, and did I – know that I came across the river illegally, and so on, and I got this. So they get me to – to the building where the – before the war was Polish police station –

Q: Okay.

A: – you know, in [**indecipherable**]. And they get me out – they get this – all this stuff out, this [**indecipherable**] there were maps, there were information, and it was all wet, so they put, you know, to dry, and they get me, whoa, I'm spy – spy, I go yes, I'm spy. And I get this code, you know, to them.

Q: It doesn't say anything.

A: No, it doesn't mean anything. But they start to – and they – they start to call somewhere. Well, it was because that was the secret police that [**indecipherable**] in this – but this was group, the military –

Q: Right.

A: – espionage.

Q: Right.

A: So they didn't had contact with. They didn't like each other.

Q: Ah, the regular **KGB** didn't like the **GRU**.

A: **GRU**, yeah.

Q: The mil – the military, mm-hm.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: You know. So, but finally they get to somebody, and after – and they, you know, in – get tough to me. And I was thirsty, I was hungry, and I was shaking, you know.

Q: You're cold, mm-hm.

A: Cold, because I put the wet pants on me and wet shirt, and so finally they got some [**indecipherable**] and they came to me. They took me, they bring me blanket, you know, and they got hot tea, and – and so on, and vodka. And so finally a fellow came with leather jacket.

Q: Okay.

A: And he give me this coat. He was not British, he was simply Soviet **GRU** military espionage chief for this part of occu – German occupied [**indecipherable**]. So on this – a Polish fellow in **Przemyśl**, the deputy chief of this **Mila**(ph)

Ruskaivich(ph) –

Q: Right.

A: – he didn't told me that. So I was, at the beginning I was sure that I will – I waiting for British.

Q: That's right.

A: But it give me something you know, that is something fishy here. So I didn't tell them, you know, that I was just repeating the – the code, you know.

Q: Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: And not telling him anything else, not asking anything else. And so finally they found this guy, he was not any British, he was Soviet military espionage chief.

Q: And did you then talk to him, once he gave you the code?

A: Well, he get this all, and he – so, he was ov – he was very sorry that **Mila(ph)** **Ruskaivich(ph)** was arrested, because his wife and children were on Soviet occupation, because the mo – Major **Ruskaivich(ph)** was assigned on the border with Soviets. And so he was mobilized to the fr-front line, so he was on western part of **Poland**, but his wife and two children was left in the **[indecipherable]**

Q: Soviet area.

A: – before – before the war they lived in town near the Soviet border. And this – this **NKGW**, he said, oh I forgot, sad mission to tell wife that her husband was arrested by Germans. So now that's ex – ex – also explain why my rish – Major **Ruskaivich(ph)** get into this business, to protect the ho –

Q: His wife.

A: – the wife and children.

Q: Well, that's what my thought was, that in some ways maybe they were hostages.

A: Well, they were at – hostages, but to some degree, you know. No, they would probably be transferred to **Siberia**, but they stay, and they need to eat, you know, so

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

they have to get some supply. So, because of that, they were living pla – practically normal life. So what happened after that, I don't know.

Q: But this is interesting, that the Polish underground was supplying, or at least this general – this general was supplying intelligence to the Soviets on the other side of the river.

A: Well because, as I said, that was the reason, because he tried to help your wife –

Q: His wife.

A: – and children, you know.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: After all, he has said, even – and we believe that, that after the – during the first World War, the war between countries which partition **Poland** – **Russia**, **Germany** and **Austria**, the war between them, between **Austria**, **Germany** and **Russia** bring the **Poland** independence. So we felt that if this can happen, so we be – we – we be – we trying to do something to convince Soviets, and you know, so th-they get fight – start to fight among themselves, because we came to conclusion that would be good for **Poland**. So that was – you know, life is very complicated.

Q: It is complicated. So you sta – so they – at some point they let you go back on the other side?

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Not just go back, they organ – I stayed there two or three days, because they have to check something on me, and check this material. And after about three days this guy came and says, it is very – he says, it looked at the German are preparing war against Soviets – not him – don't say Soviets, but Socialist Republic, you know, and so on. And I say – I said, wi-wi – from this information we get, it looks like that, because more and more troops is in – practically in the village – in many villages. Farmers' villages are full of military units. So they don't come there for –

Q: Fun.

A: – any other reason. So – and buy he d – we don't believe, and **Stalin** don't believe that – that will happen. And **Stalin** didn't believe to the last day. But the grou – the military units –

Q: The military –

A: – got the information, so they were very not happy with the possession of **Stalin**, but they cannot do anything about it.

Q: So this is the military intelligence units?

A: Yeah.

Q: The **GRU**.

A: **GRU**, yeah.

Q: Yeah. And so they come, and they – they're then convinced that you are fr –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Then – and so he come – he says, you fine [indecipherable] I was ba – three days, maybe four days even. So one of the fine – I was – start to worry, you know, what will happen, that [indecipherable]. Oh, they put me in the house across, on the street [interruption]

Q: Okay, so you're starting to worry what's going to happen, will they let you go? And then?

A: Yes, and the one evening he come, and we drove to the certain spot, and he get off the car and he's – tell me, lay down here so nobody will see you, as we were close to the river. And he says, we have all – look at. There were every mut – I don't know, 10 - 15 meters, Soviet soldier watching the other side. And they watched the German, on the other side Germans, where they are. And he says, in proper moment, you see – you see, this is boat here. There was a guy from the other side with boat on this side, and when the Germans guards were far away, we cross. So I crossed the river on boat, to the house, which was – he got some contact with them, because they told me to stay in this house until morning because –

Q: Right.

A: – police hours at night –

Q: Right, curfew.

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – you know, curfew. And so I stay in this house, and the – they got like – well, not in the house itself, but like before that, cover with some walls and so on, entrance to the house, and they got nice soft place, so I just lay down there and

[indecipherable]

Q: And you slept.

A: And I slept til morning. And in morning – oh, and I get some money from there. But the Polish money, this silver 10 dollars – 10 **zlotys** before the war, which were still good in German occupation. And so I was very happy, this is the reason I could not walk, you know, they brought me across with the thing. So I left part of this money over there, because I would look –

Q: Funny.

A: – funny, suspici – when I walk out of place where I stay, to my friends. And I leave part of – with them. When – I leave for them also for the service I got. And then the rest I bring to **[indecipherable]** to this deputy chief of this unit, and I give him and he is give – give me some, and took, I don't know for whom he or else he get for himself. But anyway – and that was the end of my espionage work.

Q: Interesting.

A: Interesting. I tell you –

Q: Really interesting.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – the bi – the little devil cannot be [indecipherable]

Q: So, what language did you speak with them? Wi – in – with the Soviets over there?

A: In Polish.

Q: In Polish, in Polish.

A: Yeah. I don't know Russian, so –

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: Th – and they didn't know German.

Q: So, I think we'll break right now. [break] All right, before the break, we were talking about your arrest –

A: Yeah.

Q: – and that you were – you were not released, and that it didn't matter that there was no evidence against you, that it was very arbitrary, very often. And you were taken from your prison to **Auschwitz-Birkenau**.

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about that journey, and how you got there.

A: Well, journey is very simple, the cattle cars, loaded, like fishes in – in – in – inside. Well, the distance was not too far, but it take just about a day to get there, because the – the wa – this car was not priority you know, in the train they stop for

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

some reason, put on sa – tra – side tracks, and so on. But we get there, I don't know what time it was because we got no – no watches. But it was – we left morning, it was early afternoon. And so well – the –

Q: What's the first thing you see?

A: The first thing? Well, first thing, we walk – at this time they s – they built this railroad station in **Birkenau**, but shortly after they open already so the trains get to the station and the people walk directly from the – for us we get to **Auschwitz** and from **Auschwitz**, like on trucks they dri-drive us to **Birkenau**, and then unloaded us, and is – is usually everything – we drop everything. Well, we were nude, we walk to a shower. So, luckily they put a – they took us to shower, not to gas –

Q: Chamber.

A: – chamber. And so they –

Q: Were you in civilian clothes, or were you in prison clothes?

A: Yes, in civilian, in civilian clothes, yeah. So we drop everything, and I don't know, first we – they put tattoo number, I think. So the prisoners put tattoo number here, here, or here; it depends on the **SS** officer on – on –

Q: On duty?

A: – in charge, yeah.

Q: Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: So well, mo-most of them – most of prisoners have here, or here –

Q: Where do you –

A: – but I got here.

Q: You have here?

A: Yeah.

Q: Can you roll up your sleeve so we could see?

A: Yeah, sure, yes. When I go to Holocaust Museum and stood in si – this is the best [indecipherable] so I go there with si – a shirt with sm – short sleeves.

Q: Uh-huh. And that's your tattoo number.

A: Yes, 153156.

Q: Any way – could – move like thi – yes.

A: Yeah. Can you have the picture of this?

Q2: Yes, I have it.

Q: 153156. Got it. Thank you so much. So that's where yours was stamped, not inside here, but on your arm –

A: It depends – well, all prisoners have here, here, here, or here.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, it depends on the officer SS, who was on duty.

Q: How long does it take to get tattooed?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Hm?

Q: How long does it take to get tattooed?

A: Well, it does not take long time. There's just tattoo, like some others they have nice girls, or – or boys, or something, you know. Same thing, just the number, so it does not take too long. And – but the – what was very painful was shaving, because the – also prisoners shave us from head, all the way down, with ma – never sharp – you know, we're all bleeding because the – it was not –

Q: The knives weren't sharp enough.

A: – not sharp enough. And so it was very painful to – shaving was painful.

Q: What happened after that?

A: Well, after that, we go by, and they throw the – the sh – you know, sh – the parents – but they didn't had – in **Birkenau** they didn't had this – this uniforms, you know, just civilian clothing. So I get jacket, which was –

Q: Too – too small?

A: Too big.

Q: Too big.

A: I could – I could probably reach to the back, you know, and pants was – were good, and so – and then in **Buchenwald**, when they transferred me to **Buchenwald**, the – we get over there this uniform, this –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Prisoner uniform.

A: – prisoners' uniforms.

Q: Okay. So there you are. What month of the year did you – were you shipped to **Auschwitz**?

A: End of September, or beginning of October, 1943.

Q: So that meant you had already been in captivity about four or five months, since May.

A: More – May – May 22nd.

Q: So it would be May – June, July –

A: June, July, August –

Q: – August, September.

A: – September. About four months.

Q: About four months.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. And what happened after you put on the clothes and – and the – and the jacket –

A: Well, they s – they s – to – brought us to – to barrack.

Q: Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: And that was their special for – for quarantine, you know. So it was in this quarantine field. Because **Birkenau** has the fields, each field divided from each other by regular fence, a wire fence, you know. And –

Q: Did you see other prisoners there?

A: Well, yes. They were –

Q: Not just from the cattle car, but ones who had already been there, yes?

A: Yes – no, well, dif – as I said, the fields were only fence, so – and there was no guard or anything, so you can go to the fence and talk to the fellow on the other side. So – but on one side there were Gypsies, so not much – from all over the **Europe** whatever – whatever the languages they talk, I didn't know. On the other side I don't remember even wa – what field it was. So – and I spend there three weeks, and after three weeks, instead of go to different field, or to **Auschwitz**, they transport me to **Buchenwald**.

Q: Oh, so you were in **Auschwitz** just for three weeks?

A: Just for three weeks in **Birkenau**.

Q: In **Birkenau** –

A: And that was this extermination camp for Jews and Gypsies. There were four crematoriums working 24 hours a day. Fifth was built, and the gas chamber, and the whole families from trains, from this ghetto cars, were simply driven there to – to

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

gas chamber. They told them that they are going to take shower; instead of water, was gas.

Q: Can you – d – when you were there, do you remember seeing those crematoria?

A: Well, I see them from apart, you know –

Q: Distance, from a distance, but did you know what –

A: From a distance.

Q: Did you know what they were?

A: Well, sure we know, because they were all prisoners who were kapo, you know – na – da – well, not kapo, the kapo was at work, we were not working. But block leader, and the **stubendienst** – well, in **Auschwitz** they call **schreiber** in **Buchenwald** they call **stubendienst**. They were working – they were not working hap – they working in barrack. The block leader, he was the head of the block, and his helper, **schreiber** they called, secretary, or **stubendienst** in **Buchenwald**, would take care of cleaning the barrack when we go to work, bring food at the evening for us when we return from work, so we s – the soup was there already, a-and so on. And clean the place. So they were old prisoners, so they know a – so – and when – when wind blew from crematoriums in our barrack, we had smell – burning, characteristic odor, smell. Very characteristic – flesh, burning flesh. It was different smell than normal, you know, something burning. So we did know at the beginning

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

what – why there is different, so they told us; this is the burning flesh, smell of burning flesh.

Q: Wow.

A: And so – so we saw the – I saw from not too far, was maybe not even half a block through the pour – to this ramp where they get these prisoners, this Jewish families, and walked them to – get them to gas chamber. So they said –

Q: So you saw some of those families being walked?

A: Oh yes, from not – really not too far. I said not half a – not even half a block. Less than that. Women with babies in their arms. Some young children, small children hanging to her mother's shirts or you know, or father pants.

Q: And you already knew where they're going?

A: Oh yes, we know. You know, that is something – so I was very glad when they took me, you know, to – that we are going some – that I am going somewhere. Not alone, but with the – hundreds of others. We didn't know where, but w-we – I wa – I was glad that I get out from this, I won't see any more, you know, those whole families going into gas chambers. Especially those other prisoners who work there. They got commando called **Canada – Canada**.

Q: Okay.

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: I don't know why, because they were very good situation, because when the transport came, they got some bad job. Those still alive get out, and they have to – to trans – the train came from far, from **Greece** or something. Was three, four days on the road. So they go in and pick up dead bodies, old people and children die in those condition. So get those dead bodies. And those who get out, sometimes the whole transport go directly to gas chamber, sometimes they make selection, and pick up young women, young men, mor – less often women, more men, to work, you know; young, strong, healthy.

Q: Did you see any of these selections?

A: Well, from afar, not –

Q: From afar, from afar.

A: – close, not close.

Q: Yeah.

A: So – but they – they si – this – all prisoners, you know, who work over there, they told us what is going on. So is – they said that sometimes parents went to gas, and daughter and son, young, strong, stay in the camp, and parents went to gas chamber. Well, they didn't stay in the camp to work long enough, because in the condition and the si – physical and mental – you know, knowing that the parents are dead already, they didn't stay too long, they – not knowing food, they get weaker,

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

and when they cannot work hard enough, so they follow their parents to gas chamber.

Q: The people who – the people who were older prisoners there, were they Polish as well?

A: No, they were all different nationalities. In **Auschwitz** majority of them were Poles, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: In **Buchenwald**, no, but in **Auschwitz** majority were Poles, because for quite a while **Auschwitz** was camp for Poles. According to history, and I read somewhere, the first transport to **Auschwitz**, th-they – when they opened the camp – because **Auschwitz** was, before the war was military barracks. They were two floors -- buildings – brick buildings, you know. So they just build later crematorium, and some other things they needed, surrounded them with barbed wires, fence and towers with for – with guards with machine guns and so on.

Q: Were you – when you were being transported, did you – did you know that you were being taken to **Auschwitz**?

A: No, I didn't know.

Q: You didn't know.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: I don't know where. They get us from **Tarnów** to train, and this is it. I get – when we get close to **Auschwitz** I knew station, so I thought that maybe we are going to **Auschwitz**, and we went to – to **Auschwitz**. Same thing later to

Buchenwald, I didn't know where we go, but I know geography, so on the – on the way, the towns, you know, we pass [**indecipherable**] I don't know if I go – we go to **Buchenwald**, or to **Dachau**, or some other camp in **Germany**.

Q: Did you know the names of these German camps by then?

A: Yes, we knew some name. **Dachau** we knew. We knew **Buchenwald**. There was **Sachsenhausen** near **Berlin**.

Q: That's right.

A: And – no, and – and **Auschwitz**. So we knew already, especially in underground we know, we got some information. We have some prisoners who escape from **Auschwitz**, and –

Q: Had you met any of the prisoners who escaped?

A: I didn't met them, but they were in the ungra – underground paper, you know, the condition – this situation over here, what it is there, and so on. But when I get there, I still came to conclusion that I – I know very little. It is impossible in wars, to describe the ca – the feelings, you know. This barbed wires, this guards, those **SS**

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

men with the dogs, and those prisoners. Many they call – they call them – oh gee, remember – the – well they – it will come to me.

Q: Okay, okay. So, what kind of work did they have you do during those three weeks in **Auschwitz**?

A: Oh, three weeks nothing, we didn't do anything special. That was quarantine.

Q: Okay.

A: They wi – we did not left the camp.

Q: Okay.

A: So the block leader, who was German, in this case – in my case, when I was – he was German political communist, they said. The **stubendienst**, I don't know. He was, I think, green, because we had triangle. Red triangle was political prisoner. And there was letter **P** for Pole, **R** for Russian, you know. And then, on this triangle, below this triangle, was a number.

Q: So you – the number that was on your arm was on the triangle.

A: Yes, also here and here.

Q: On your pants – okay.

A: Here was also just the number, nothing, no triangle there, but –

Q: Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – but here triangle. Then recognize – criminals had green triangles. That was – we recognize that is a criminal prisoner. Now, the religious, by – those jude – Jehovah Witness, and some other sects who refused to serve in military, so they got purple triangle.

Q: And was everybody in your barracks with the red triangle with the **P**?

A: All red – red triangle. Well, the first – at the beginning in this tra – in the – in the mar – matter of fact, in **Buchenwald** too, there were barracks – block, they call it, nationalities. There were few blocks in **Buchenwald**, there were a few blocks Poles only. There was also one block for Jews in the – in the camp there.

Q: In **Buchenwald**, or –

A: In **Buchenwald**, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And they said that there were some engineers, you know, very high, technically educated people, and they need them, so this was the reason they keep them there.

Q: Okay. So after the quarantine – and that was to make sure that you didn't bring in typhus or something?

A: Yeah.

Q: Mm-hm. After the quarantine, one day –

A: Well, they pick up us again, put in the train, and we went. I don't know where.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: Well, I was lucky that I get to **Buchenwald**, because many went to **Austria**.

Q: **Mauthausen**?

A: **Mauthausen**. Which was bad because they got stone **quarrel** main work there.

Q: Yeah.

A: So the work was very hard. They got stone **quarrel** in **Buchenwald** too, but this was one of the commanders, not the large one.

Q: So tell –

A: And there were many others.

Q: – tell me, when you got to – did you recognize geographically where you were?
Could you see through the cattle car? Was there a window or something?

A: Yes, when we were going – I remember **Nysa**. There's **Nysa** now in **Poland**.
That is partisan **Poland** after the war, **Nysa, Nysa**. So, and the po – the train stop there, and some people, Germans, because that was German territory already, some people on the station waiting for train, were talking Polish bandits, Polish bandits are in the train.

Q: **Ponish(ph) bandyta**.

A: **Ponish(ph) bandytin(ph)**, yes.

Q: **Ponish(ph) bandyta**.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: **Ponish**(ph) **bandytin**(ph), exactly.

Q: And –

A: So I hear that from there, through the – and I didn't feel bad about.

Q: [laughter] Okay, so you knew you were in **Nysa**, in **Germany**.

A: **Nysa** si – well, I didn't know where we are going, but when we get – we get in **Weimar**, from the railr – from the station, and we walk, then I came to conclusion that we are probably going to **Buchenwald** because **Buchenwald's** just north or **Weimar**.

Q: So what train station did you go to, the **Weimar** central train station, or to a special one that was close to –

A: No, we – the regular – regular station, that you don't – don't have extra trains, other e-extra tracks.

Q: No extra tracks to the camps themselves?

A: No, to the camps they have, but to **Buchenwald** – and **Buchenwald** is on – on the slope of a hill.

Q: Okay.

A: So the train thi – can't get – can get close to it, but not to the **Buchenwald** itself.

Q: Okay. And what did it look like as you were going from **Weimar** to

Buchenwald? What was –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Well, pe – nice territory, this **Thuningen**(ph), central **Germany**. And **Weimar** – and – and **Buchenwald** is sort of – **Weimar** is just south of **Harz** mountains, which are very nice – nice range of mountains in **Germany**. And **Buchenwald** is closer to mountains than **Weimar** itself. **Weimar** is well known, dred – German [indecipherable] spend a lot of time there, in **Weimar**. And so we walked from **Weimar** to **Buchenwald** east, about seven or eight kilometers. And at that time **Buchenwald** was not very bad camp, because that was 1943, at yet the end of September or beginning of October, because they need workers. They built – outside of **Buchenwald** they built 12 factories, 12 holes [indecipherable] each one – in each hole they work – they – they produce something else. Majority of this pla – of the holes were producing something for the military.

Q: And so, when you got –

A: So, it was th-the holes were – they built barb wires fence same as around **Buchenwald**, and around the constellation camp, and with everything else. And so in the morning when they opened, when we supposed to go to war, the guard took position in those spaces where they supposed to be, and they opened the gates, and we walked to [indecipherable] the holes where we work.

Q: And what ho – wh-what hole were you assigned to?

A: I didn't work in this, cause I worked someplace else.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay, where did –

A: I work for the b – for a while inside the wooden – I split the – the – this part with the roots, you know, of tree, which is –

Q: The trunk of the tree.

A: The end of the tree inside, you know, and cut here. So they brought over there, and my job was split them and – in small pieces, so those other guys with saw, they make it wood for burning for whatever.

Q: Okay, so what you had to do was split the trunks of trees?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And this was –

A: That was light work, you know.

Q: Well, it's not like lifting stones, that's for sure.

A: But it was very hard.

Q: Was it?

A: Well, sure. I learned na – for example, I na – I didn't know that. I would think that – that the – the hardwood, you know, it is hard to split. And – but the reverse is true. Hardwood is easy to split. Your make little strength, and they got special steel and wood thing, you know. You make in this group, steel – this – I don't know the na – E-English name for that. And you hit with the hammer two or three times, and

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

it goes down, and split little more. So make bigger thing, and then you take larger, or even wooden thing, and you hit with heavy –

Q: What instrument did you have to use?

A: Well, the regular – no –

Q: Ax, or hammer?

A: La – hammer.

Q: Hammer. So you had a hammer to be able to split the wood, but no axes or anything like that?

A: Well, there were axes to help, you know, sometimes, to start, you know.

Q: To start the process.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you say this was inside? This work was inside?

A: No, outside.

Q: Outside. Outside.

A: No, it was outside.

Q: Okay.

A: So –

Q: What did the barracks look like that you were housed in?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Well, the barracks very wooden – they were wooden and they – in – in **Buchenwald** they – well, **Auschwitz** was brick, because that was former military barracks. But **Buchenwald** was built, so they have – they have few built brick bil – two floor buildings. But majority were bar-barracks, you know, long building, and in the middle – in the middle bi – in the building was entrance, you know, gate, and there was room and across was washroom, you know, toilets and things like that. And on both side of – from this all were large rooms, sleeping people. There were three – three floors –

Q: Three levels.

A: – three levels [**indecipherable**] you know. So – and just narrow spaces between, and again and again, I don't know, it was 5-600 people in one barrack.

Q: That's huge.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you sleep on a bottom bunk or a top bunk?

A: No, I was on top.

Q: And which was the better bunk to have? Did it matter?

A: It does not matter much.

Q: Okay. Okay. And since there were five or 600 people, were – did – were they of all different nationalities in that one barrack?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: No, usually they have together, as I said, Poles, they have few barracks. So I don't know how many thousands of Poles were in **Buchenwald**. There were a few thousand Poles in **Buchenwald**.

Q: Were there –

A: And there were Czechs, who were before us, you know.

Q: Were there any Soviet prisoners of war?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No, they were in **Auschwitz** only.

Q: Well, you see bu – what – I've been to **Buchenwald** –

A: Yeah.

Q: – but of course, in the 80s. And yes, in the late 1980s, when it was a memorial.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And the whole – when I walked into the memorial – I don't know if you've been back –

A: No.

Q: – but when I went into the memorial, the whole place where the barracks had been was all level. There was no – no buildings left.

A: Oh. Oh.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: But there were a few buildings on the side. And one of them was a – one of them was supposed to be a doctor's office, but it was a trick place. It was a place where you come to get a medical exam, and you're standing high to be measured, your height measured, and instead, a little circle opens up at the back of a person's neck, and a gun is stuck in and then they're shot. And when I went, in the late 1980s, they said this is what was done with Soviet prisoners of war. So if you –

A: Well, maybe later, when I was not –

Q: When you weren't there.

A: Because the **Buchenwald** was bombed in August 1944, and we lost the work there. They bomb all those – Americans did very good job.

Q: Ah, they bombed **Buchenwald** –

A: They bomb – bomb all the factories, but not the – our barracks.

Q: Oh.

A: So they did very good job. And so we lost the work, so they transfer us to different camps. So I landed at the end of – again in September '44, in **Bad**

Gandersheim, about a hundred kilometer further west. It was a huge hole, and they supposed to build airplanes. So –

Q: Mm-hm. So you were in **Buchenwald** almost a year. Not quite –

A: Yes, yes, yeah.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Not quite a year, okay.

A: Well, that was branch of the bo – **Buchenwald**, so it – it was part of
Buchenwald.

Q: The place that you went to –

A: **Bad Gandersheim**.

Q: Yeah.

A: **Bad Gandersheim**, yeah.

Q: Before we get to there, is – so did you spi – was your work the whole time you
were in **Buchenwald** splitting these trunks?

A: No, no. No, I – all – all different kind of work. We know from underground, you
get to **Auschwitz**, say that you are a gardener, because they got large garden,
vegetables and things like that for **SS**.

Q: Okay.

A: So that other people work there. So I had that. Well – but they transfer me from
Auschwitz to **Buchenwald**, and in **Buchenwald**, garden was very bad place to
work.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yes, because **Buchenwald** is in slope over hill.

Q: Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: So, it is bad soil.

Q: Okay.

A: Yellow clay mixed with sand. And now, working in – what I got? The whole under shoe, you know, this whole wooden shoe –

Q: Right.

A: – no stockings, no [indecipherable] even, because I had nothing –

Q: Right.

A: – you know, barefoot in this wooden thing. And then li – November, December [indecipherable] rain, wet –

Q: Cold.

A: – clay turn into mud, and we carry the s – fertilizer, the – all the canals get to the place where they – filters, you know, and this clear water run through some creeks, some – a river, and this heavy stuff left there, they put in the – they would have wooden box, quite large, in the middle, and two wooden, big, heavy –

Q: Handles?

A: – handles. One guy on front, one in the back, and two of us. They loaded this box with the foot, and we carry this, you know.

Q: The manure.

A: The manure.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: The manure, okay.

A: On the – on the fields, yeah.

Q: Oh, please sit down, please sit down, okay.

A: On – on – on the – on the fields, you know. And sometimes quite distance. And here, the mud, you put – you – you get – you try make next step. So you pull your foot out, but shoes sta – that wooden sti – shoe –

Q: Stays.

A: – stay in the mud. So, you have to put – start back – put back, and it is – was going like that. So I get my s – foot here, so mix up, you know – not mix up, but wounded, it was –

Q: Infected.

A: – infected. And so I landed in hospital, and that was interesting too, this hospital.

Q: Yeah, tell me, what does a hospital in **Buchenwald** look like?

A: Well, they – at the beginning they didn't have much hospital, but as I said, because they sent the workers to mil – they mobilize workers, German workers, so they need to replace them, they replace them with prisoners. So that was the situation, that condition were much easier than before. So – so finally I got this very – I could not put the shoe – foot in the shoe, so they send me to a hospital. There was a barrack like our barracks, large room. I don't remember now how many g –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

how many beds there were, four, five – 10 – 12 beds in the room. And there was head of the room, he was prisoners too, Czech. They said that he was male nurse from Czechs' army, okay. So, that evening – so first time I was in bed and sleep good, and although this pain bothering me. Next m – next day he walk around and come to me and says, well, what you got here? Well, let's go. So we went to next room. And next room was operating room. There was a table. On table was paper like the butcher shops have, you know, white paper. There was some prisoners earlier down on this paper, and other prisoners operated – was digging something in his belly.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So – and this guy tell me that this operator – prisoners – he's the best surgeon in – in **Prague**, capital of **Czechoslovakia**; a professor of the university, and professional – it's a good surgeon. But prisoners, and with primitive con – situation, conditions.

Q: Right, no now – no pain killers.

A: No pain killers, no. So we walk by and ne – he put me – he stop and talk to this surgeon for a while, and then he come to me – well, we sit – we sat at the end of the

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

room, and then he come and put me – and he said, you know, he will be with this – digging this belly for a couple of hours, so if you want, I can do this to you.

Q: Okay.

A: [**indecipherable**] I was in pain, you know, infection and si – fever. Go ahead.

And so he – he pot – put me – set me on chair like they have in shoe stores, you know.

Q: Oh yeah, mm-hm.

A: You know, it's – chair. And then he walked back and talked to the pri – to this surgeon – to the doctor, and came back and he brought ice pick, jar with some fluid, a scissors and paper bandages, because there was no other bandages during the war, no cotton in **Europe** because blockade, American and British navy you know, don't get any – don't se – don't – they cannot bring any cotton, or coffee, for example. Coffee were – were gold in price in – in – during the war. So, he came and he says, are you strong, he asks me. I said, oh, I think I am. And he look at, I have many marks you know, after beating, the tortures. So he says, well, put your hands – and I was sitting on this chair, it's like shoe store, in the back. And he says, don't touch me. Even if it's very painful, don't touch me. Okay. So I gi – I was sitting like that, and he put – and he hit with the ice pick, you know, hit this –

Q: Infected area.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – infected area, and stick – and make hole and took scissors in, and
[**indecipherable**]. I got big marks here after that. And it was release you know,
because the stuff start to run out, and I feel – felt release. The pain was gone, just
about. And – but when he finally – this – the stuff really run down, he put some dish
on the bottom, and when he start and get – this was in this jar, it was alc-alcohol.
And so when he – this cotton – not cotton, but –

Q: Paper bandages.

A: – that pe – pe – piece of paper bandage stuck there, and start to clean, well that
was pain. It was painful. And then, after he cleaned, he just bandaged. No sew,
nothing, no stitches, nothing. No in – nothing, nothing, just – just –

Q: Paper bandage.

A: – cleaned that – cleaned that and paper bandages and that's it. And it – it get
together –

Q: So how long were you then laying in the hospital for –

A: I got no – I – I don't remember. Not too long.

Q: Not too long?

A: Yeah. And after this, they put me to split those –

Q: Ah, okay.

A: – you know –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: To split that –

A: – that –

Q: – so that you w –

A: – that was the re-convalescent job, you know.

Q: **[laughter]** So that meant that you didn't have to go in that muck again. No more gardening.

A: No more gardening, yes.

Q: No more gardening, okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And then what – did you have any other job?

A: Well, I have – well, if you – they – once in a while they send me to – to here, to there. Nothing s – no, ne-neither one was any special. Oh, the most important.

Later, I get as a – as all prisoners already – in **Buchenwald** there was two lagers, two camps. Main camps and small camps. Small camps, there was few barracks for quarantine. And they were separated by fence. By the regular fence, not –

Q: Barbed wire.

A: – barbed wires, and no ga – ga – guards or anything. Only there was a door leading to it in the – in this fence, and there was one prisoner on duty checking permission to – from the camp, to small camp.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: Why? Because the small camp was quarantine camp. New prisoners. And I, for example, once in four weeks, they re – ke – in **Buchenwald**, they send postcards to the families. It was important to notify family that I am alive. Another one they can get – we can get parcels from re – families to **Buchenwald**. So, not a very important thing with all this –

Q: Right.

A: – not enough food and so on, everybody was getting skin and – bone and skin.

Q: Sk – yeah.

A: And – and so it was important. So I felt the pa – the – one margarine – before breakfast we got piece of bread, and one margarine, in a regular – regular – you know, one margarine, this thing. So it was important to save some piece of bread and piece of the margarine for noon, because at noon you will – we – we were – we were getting half quart of – supposed to be coffee, but there was no coffee. Ersatz coffee, that's terrible. So it was important to have piece of bread to work after noon. At the beginning we didn't know that, because everybody – there was not too much, this piece of bread for one –

Q: Person.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Yeah. For breakfast. And so – but [**indecipherable**] and so this piece of margarine was 25 cents on the black market, and the postcard was four **pfennigs** – 25 – not cents, but **pfennigs**, the German – no, German, **pfennig** –

Q: Yeah, **pfennigs**, **pfennig**.

A: – yeah, **pfennig**, 25 **pfennigs**. And postcard was four. So I give the four margarine for postcard.

Q: Wow.

A: This is the way they handle, you know, black market. And that was tho-tho-those guards were to protect us from wi – di – from, you know, getting advantage from us, but didn't work much. But anyway, after some – near the end of – before this – when they bombed **Buchenwald** in August, I was already working in – inside in the ga – in the camp, and I just watched those airplanes bombing with very big smile.

Q: Now, you said there wa – was a Jewish barracks, as well?

A: In **Buchenwald** there was one barrack Jews only.

Q: And they were privileged – not privileged, but they were –

A: Not privileged. This way –

Q: – but they were kept because they had skills.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Yes. This is what they told us [**indecipherable**] other prisoners, you know, older. They were longer there, so they knew more about, that this is, they are skill workers, and this is the reason they keep them there.

Q: Okay. Did you have any contact with them directly, or were they separate?

A: No, we had no contact, and they warn us other prisoners, don't get in touch, because if the Germans notice, you can be in trouble.

Q: Okay. Were people dying a lot?

A: Well, they were dying. They'd get beaten at work by prisoners, other prisoners. So there was a system, unhuman system, that human kill other humans. Prisoners kill other prisoners just to survive.

Q: How did – how did killing another prisoner help somebody survive?

A: Well, he was **vorarbeiter**, or kapo –

Q: Okay.

A: – you know. So he didn't work. So that was great advantage. Even if he don't get more food, or anything, but at least he doesn't have to work. So, he has more chances, you know, to survive.

Q: Okay.

A: But he have to do the job. Naturally, they were, majority of them trying not just to look when kapo is coming, so work harder, you know, we know that. So we did.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Well, the kapo went and we – you know, again. So that sometimes **vorarbeiter** was watching, not to get in trouble himself, but at the same time he didn't push us any hard. He got this wooden stick, but he didn't use. But there were some who did. Same thing was kapos. Kapo had three, four groups, and he walk from one group to another, you know, to check on the **vorarbeiters** and we work. And he also was armed with wooden stick, and he used that quite often.

Q: So you're talking a four –

A: Majority of them were German criminals.

Q: So a four **arbeiter** was like a foreman of that unit?

A: Foreman of the group.

Q: Of the group.

A: Twenty-eight – 25 gr – people working, doing same job, you know.

Q: Mm-hm. Were there –

A: Being s – let's say, digging ditch for – for s-sewers.

Q: Were there any women in **Buchenwald**?

A: They were separately.

Q: They were separate, okay.

A: No, they were – they were not mixed, no.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay. Okay. The sewers, were the sewers being built for the camp itself? You said there were sewers –

A: Yes, for – for the camp, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, there was – in **Buchenwald** there were approximately 30,000 prisoners.

Q: Huge.

A: Sure, sure.

Q: Huge.

A: So they were about thousands **SS**, the – the brick barracks, two, three floors were the **SS** guard live. There were also several hundreds of them.

Q: Did you have contact with them directly, or mostly your contact with –

A: No, we have no with this contact. The only contact we have with them, when some – when we wer – go to work, and some of them best – beast – work on side, and with the gun, hit us in the – in the – in the **[indecipherable]**

Q: Yeah.

A: – in the si – on the side here. There were some like that.

Q: Were you ever hit in the side like that?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: Were you beaten?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Not beaten, no.

Q: Okay, okay. Were there executions?

A: Yes, there were execution. They hang those who try to escape, and there were – and the – and were caught, they were hang publicly so we all see, as don't do that because this is what will happen to you. Matter of fact, in **Auschwitz** – no, in **Birkenau**, when we get to **Birkenau**, the first head count, you know, at **[indecipherable]** they pick up as two – two **SS** officer walk in front of the column of the barrack, it was bi – I said 600 or something like that people, and point out **raus, raus**. And there was a to – fellow – friend of my – my father from next village. And we were standing together. On the other side I have a friend from tar – from high school, you know, on the other side. And he pointed over at us, and we both try to get out, and he says **älter raus**. Older –

Q: The old one.

A: – old one **raus**. So he was old –

Q: Okay.

A: – because my age – he was even probably older than my father. They were working together. He go – was – he next village. He was coming to my father because they were in – in the co-op – cope – cope – milk co –

Q: Cooperative.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – cooperative, yeah. And so he get out, and they take about 10 of them, and [indecipherable] us to turn out near – they walk them near a fence, and shoot them there. And the SS ca – ess man – this officer came to us and says, this will happen to you if you try to escape, you – you disobey our orders, you don't work hard, and so on.

Q: Charming.

A: Yeah. Th-This was welcome to **Auschwitz-Birkenau**. And I wrote about that in – under the title, welcome to **Auschwitz**, to **Birkenau**.

Q: Welcome to **Auschwitz-Birkenau**. Did you have a similar welcome to **Buchenwald**?

A: No, no.

Q: Okay.

A: No, **Buchenwald** at that time, as I said, it was not as severe, and as bad as **Auschwitz** still was. Because they build those factories, and they need people to work.

Q: Okay.

A: So the regime was the same, the food and so on not more, but at least they didn't beat people without reason and then kill them, or anything like that.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: So remind me again, what were the kinds of things those factories were producing?

A: Well, all different kind of military things. One I – I know one was producing the wooden part to a gun, you know. It was wooden shop producing this for a gun. There was one producing the cases for radio. And there were some parts for – some milit – for some other sa – there was one barrack inside the camp, who also only people with high technical education worked there. They didn't know what they were doing. Later, we learned that they were producing part to this **A1, A2** th-they shoot on **London**, you know.

Q: Oh, the **V2** rockets.

A: **V – V2** rocket – rocket.

Q: Okay.

A: Part of –

Q: Part of it.

A: – that, not – not the whole part.

Q: Yeah.

A: Not the whole rocket, but part to the rocket.

Q: Interesting.

A: Yeah.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Interesting. Did news – was there a well-developed information network among the prisoners?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: In **Buchenwald** was underground – underground organization, but completely by communists.

Q: I see. So they – did they –

A: And it was nobody try – if anybody try with – without them, very quick they transfer him to someplace else.

Q: So you found it –

A: And this happened to me, too.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me how that happened.

A: Well, I – there was many Poles, you know, in several blocks. So we came to conclusion that at least maybe we can some ways get some information and publish weekly bulletin about the information, if anything else. So I started that with few other people, and we get one – few copies only, without some information from – thr – through radio, from **[indecipherable]** we got some people – some fellow who

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

worked in the office. They got radio and so on. [**indecipherable**] combination. And this first few copies we pu – po – po – get in, and shortly after, I was on the list to be transferred to **Bad Gandersheim**, to branch of **Buchenwald**.

Q: So where – how did you distribute this few pieces of – of – few copies –

A: Through friends, you know.

Q: Through friends, okay. And so – and so they didn't really want you there to write up the –

A: Well, the communists –

Q: Right.

A: – have monopoly. They don't want have competition, you know.

Q: So you found out where the power was, who had the power.

A: Yeah, well. Well, because there were many German communists you know, in **Buchenwald**.

Q: Yeah.

A: And even their lager leader, they got so called lager leader – not in **Buchenwald**, in this **Bad Gandersheim** where I was. And this lager leader, who was a German communist.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yeah.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay. So what did you do in **Bad Gandersheim**?

A: It – **Bad Gandersheim** we supposed to build – well, first we built – they have no – there was no camp. Now 200 came from **Buchenwald** first transport, I was in first transport, and then more. All together there were about 550 of us. Majority of them were fra – Frenchmen, Italian and Russian. And then later, from **Auschwitz** came about 50 Poles and few from **Buchenwald**, so all together was about 55 - 56 Poles, but were hundreds of Italians, Russians and Frenchmens.

Q: Okay.

A: And so first we have to build our barracks, our camp. They put us to sleep in old monastery from medieval's time, which was not used as monastery, because the territory became Protestant, completely hundred percent.

Q: Okay.

A: So this monastery was practically barn; the landlord, large landlord used this as – for hay, straw, and things like that. So we sleep there and build our barracks, and dig ditches to – to get sewers, water and so on.

Q: Okay.

A: So, we get there in September, and I think lend of – end of December, we moved to our barracks already, from this old monastery. And so then we supposed to build airplane. There a was railroad and on little higher, and on this slope of this – from

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

regular to the land here, there were boxes with machines. **Milicz** air – air – air pl –
air factory **Milicz** –

Q: **Milicz**.

A: – in **Poland**, built just before the war. Open, I think, in 1938.

Q: Wow.

A: And naturally Germans took over, they use it. But when the Soviets army were approaching, they get all these men to all the machines, and send them to **Bad Gandersheim**, and they built factory to bil – for build airplanes. So we supposed to build the airplane, but first we have to build our barracks, our camp, o-our sewers an-and everything else. Then one group get those boxes, and install in the hole, the hole was ready. Then they were barracks like long and – but brick buildings, not too far away, next to this factory, where the German masters live. Civilians, you know, electrician, whatever what they need, professional people to help, you know, in this – to build this factory. And so we installed those machines and – and so on, and then we, sometimes in winter we start to build the airplane. There was no – someplace else they bra – bring the mortars, you know, for – and we build just this thing, but we didn't finish it, not even one sa – April first. Instead of go to work, they decided that we walk to **Buchenwald**.

Q: From **Bad Gandersheim**?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Yeah, about hundred or more kilometers.

Q: How much – many – how many kilometers was it?

A: A hundred, maybe more.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you – now, did you – was there ever any sabotage of this kind of manufacturing?

A: Well, what kind of sabotage would – can we –

Q: Okay, just asking.

A: We mi – we didn't – didn't build even the airplane.

Q: To sabotage it.

A: To sabotage it, no.

Q: Yeah. Okay, all right. Okay, so then you're on this walk from **Bad**

Gandersheim to Buchenwald.

A: To **Buchenwald**. Well, when we hear that, that we have to walk, we came to conclusion that most situation must be bad for Germans if they don't have train or trucks to –

Q: To take us.

A: – get us there.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: So, we walk. We get – again, more than normal portion of breakfast this mor – bread, and margarine and we start to walk. We walk. There was the – we were at the end of **Harz** mountains and so we walk east, over the mountains, so the place get higher and higher. And that was the road, the highest road in the slope of north – north slope of the mountains. And so after a couple days, we didn't have anything to eat, so we're gonna – well, at the beginning, we just get not too far from this place – nice town, **Seesen**, I remember, very nice town. I was there later, after the war, for a while. And they took about 18 or so prisoners, and took – they were – we were in forest, walking through forest – took them on sight, and shoot them there. And why? Because they were thieves. Thieves? What kind of thieves? When we were digging – working near the field with potatoes, and there was large la – landlord with a large play – a large field of potatoes, and they piling up those potatoes, you know, before they covered them. So it was mu – large –

Q: Pile.

A: – pile of potatoes. So somebody sneak in and steal a couple. I did that too couple times. And if it – th-the – he was caught. So he was **Ponish**(ph), and he get on the list as a thief. And those thieves, they shoot them.

Q: On this march.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: On this march. And then we start to walk. We walked, it was death march. And well, the food was going. They didn't give us much more, so we were getting weaker. Some people cannot walk, older people especially cannot walk, because they were too weak. And they took them one side, shoot them, and we went further. That was called death march, and there were many of those death march in **Germany** at – near the end of the war. And so what saved us – me, was dog biscuits. I have great respect for dog biscuits [**indecipherable**]

Q: Really? So how did you get these dog biscuits?

A: Well, one night we – we were already in mountains. You know, fields, forests, not much any places, were here and there some motels, hotels, you know, on the road. Some hotels, specially for tourists you know, and the people who want spend vacation in mountains, you know, so some sanitoriums. And one evening we were getting close to night, and we hear dog – dog barks, you know. And are many over there. So we get to farm where they raised these German Shepherds, those German dogs. So they put us – dark was just about approaching, so they put us against barn. Was here, and then here was this building with dogs, they're barking. And so they got only here to cover, to have the guard, you know. And the evening, or at night, when the – those guys against the wall in this barn, you know, one of them noticed that one of plank, the wall was wooden planks, you know, up and down. And on the

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

bottom the plank was rotten and the nail don't hold the – so he moved this plank to the side, and seeing inside. And what he got there? Boxes with dog biscuits. So he start to pull – get those dog biscuits out. Well, the news from m-mouth to mouth spread very fast, and everybody at the b-barn there tried ev – and some – this wall, the nail don't hold, and he can get in. And two others get in. So three guys went inside, and they start to pass those dog biscuits. There were boxes with dog biscuits. So they pass those ba – dog biscuit to us. Well, we didn't had much anything, just pockets here, and there's just not too much room, you know, in the pockets.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: So we put against here, on the shirt, you know –

Q: In the shirt, yeah.

A: – around, all around, you know, those ba – and they were square, very large, square and thick, and very hard, you cannot chew it. But you put corner in the mouth and saliva soften little, and you bite piece by piece. So next morning everybody was working and chewing the dog biscuits. But the – if not those biscuits, I won't be here, because this is all what we had for next two or three days.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: You know.

Q: Oh my goodness, yeah.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: So if not those dog biscuits, I won't be here.

Q: So this was April first when you started this march?

A: Yes.

Q: And –

A: And 13 – April 13, I get – I jump out, I run away.

Q: How many kilometers do you think you'd gone?

A: I don't know how many, but we were – they put us on field, we – we – oh, we hear already not just artillery, but machine guns.

Q: Okay.

A: So this means that British and American forces are closing. So they put us one night in large pile of straw and so on, on the field. And in the morning, close to morning, we – first time we hear this machine guns, even artillery, and then machine. So first thing was we try – in the morning we stay again, we don't go out.

Well, early in the morning, just -- just little, not completely daytime, trucks arrive and get out – they get us out. And we decided that we will stay here. There was about 50 of us Poles, and we got one fellow, he was oldest one among us, and by profession he was engineer from **Poland**. And so we – so the people get out, and we stands there. Then trucks arrive, and then in last moment, this guy says, you know

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

what? Ma – this is not – no time, let's go. We just jump out. Shortly after they start to machine guns in the straw, and those who stay there all were killed.

Q: Oh my God.

A: Some of them tried to escape, you know, get out, but they were knocked down by the machine gun. So we were lucky.

Q: Okay.

A: But next day – the same day, the trucks – we went through a town which was no – no any authority in uniform. They had civilians – civilians militia.

Q: Okay.

A: Civilians with old guns, you know [**indecipherable**] keep order, you know, the town. So we know that there's no – any police, not even no Gestapo, no army, nobody else. So – and they get us through this town, and drop us in the field. Near was forest, and so now we start to get to – get – what the hell to do? And we came to conclusion, they're now the guard. There was one – one **SS** officer, I don't remember his title now, who was from **Poland**, German from **Poland**; speak Polish as good as I did. And when they start to kill those guys who cannot walk all – all the way, the le – and they were weak, cannot walk, they just take them outside and shoot them, and we go further. Was – was 50 of us, we put ourself arms, and we decide – we got some few older people with – among us, that we are not going to

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

allow that. In case they try to pick up anyone from us, the closest one un – und – di
– di – guard – we jump on the closest guard, and get his gun, we can – they will kill
– older guns – older guys will kill few of us, but we will get gun, and then we can
be **[indecipherable]** the rest.

Q: Okay.

A: So – and this guy, he was in charge of this march from **SS**, this guy from **Poland**
– German from **Poland**. And he saw that we are walking like that, and he came to
us in Polish. He told us, don't be afraid. The – you're is – you – it is okay, you are
okay. Don't be afraid, nothing will happen to you guys.

Q: Mm-hm. And so when did you run away?

A: So, in this field, as I said, they jump – dump us from the trucks, and we came to
conclusion that this is the time to – is forest nearby, they won't – now, the guard
change a exce – with exception of two or three younger **SS**, those **Hitler** followers,
the rest were old men from the first World War, 50 or 60 years old. They mobilized
them, and they replaced the younger **SS**, who went to fight. They – they put them as
a guard in that – and so we know that they won't shoot us, they will shoot guard in
the window is where we were sending, you know.

Q: Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: And this is right – it – it – it – it would happen. Really, that – those guys were – hate those **[indecipherable]** not as – worse than we did.

Q: Interesting to know.

A: Yeah.

Q: Interesting to –

A: Really, really.

Q: Yeah.

A: I have one guy who, we were walking in that – near the tracks, he was walking on the tracks, and putting some machine guns to this factory there. And he was walking there, and – and so on, he – and so he asked, from where you? And I said **Przemyśl. Przemyśl?** And he walk – walking back. That was the fortress **Austria** fortress. He was there during the first World War. So – and he be – we became acquaintances. So, next day, when I was wal – he walked there, and I noticed little s-something felled out fro-from out these – his coat.

Q: Pants? Oh, from his coat, okay.

A: This large, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because that was fall already.

Q: Yeah.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: October. So I look, little – little sandwich. Then, when we walked, w-we start talk, you know, said, I told, my father is invalid, you know, wounded – he was wounded during – he was in **Austria** army, he was wounded. Got pensioned, and got one leg nine centimeters shorter – shorter. And wa – so he wa – na – were – I said, Italian front. Oh, that was bad, Italian front, it was bad.

Q: So he knew. He knew.

A: He knew, because you know, in the mountains.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, what happened, the artillery pieces hit the mountains, and not just the pieces of the steel, but the pieces of stone, with the gra – granite, or whatever it was, get pieces of stone, split, and the pieces [**indecipherable**] also people.

Q: So there was a certain sympathy that grew up.

A: Yes, yeah, yeah.

Q: And so you knew that these old guys, who were with the old rifles, would not shoot at you, as much as they would at the **SS**?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So you ran away.

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: And I ran a – not only one. We decided that we about – was not all the headquarters [indecipherable] you know, but I was little devil when I was young boy, so I always take chances, you know.

Q: So how many –

A: So I jump, and they really shoot me here, shooting, but nobody was hurt, and I'll je – I'll get to the forest. And then later – it was close to evening, shortly after – I know that they went around after us, because o-others who ran away, you know.

Q: That's right. There aren't enough of them to go.

A: So we know – we know that.

Q: Okay.

A: – that they wouldn't run after us, because they [indecipherable] 500 – probably is not 500, but 450 maybe, or so. But anyway – so we ju – jump and next – and before dark I get into couple fellows in forest, so we were together and we went to sleep in the forest there. And next morning we went to – was near – by – was small river, to get wash, you know, and so on. So we s – we were washing ourself in the river, and finally, the road was a little higher, and finally we hear, hands up.

Germans, militia. Those civilians, you know, with [indecipherable] with old gun?

Well, they got guns, we didn't. And so we get out, and they walk us to a field.

There were couple hundreds already, civilians, you know, not the – we were – from

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

concentration camp they were – those who escape from labor camps, you know, and some other.

Q: Right, right.

A: Not Poles, the other different national – nationalities. And they assemble us so on this field, and later walk us to – nearby was a huge building. It was ru – a – Soviet **Russia's** prisoners of war camp. So they walk us there, but the building was full of people, and th-they got the rooms, you know, even the corridors, there were already some, like I, escapee, you know. So they s – we stay in – on the yard there. And fi – it was close to late afternoon, and not to sh – not to – for – for sometimes those Russians who were upstairs in the ta – hap – ta – third floor, I think it was third – three floor building, higher that, through the window to us, and down bottom, that white flag on the church, that he saw there was down –

Q: A white flag on the church down in the village.

A: – yeah, down in the village there, you know, he saw from – we didn't, but he saw from the tower. And then the German guard get out, line up. They then – in some – we hear already some machines – mo-motors coming, and they line up, then they throw the guns a-ahead of them, and then we hear the motor cross. So one with the keys walked to the gate, you know. But before he – he – he tried to – were just about trying to put the key in the –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Gate?

A: – in the door when the gar – shot, you know, from the other side, Americans shoot the door – you know, this lock, and kick – knock the – with foot, you know, open the door. And this German that – naturally [**indecipherable**] they all get hands up, and –

Q: So he wanted to lock the gate, basically he wou –

A: No, he want to open the gate.

Q: Open the gate. Ah –

A: He wanted to open the gate.

Q: – to open the gate.

A: But the American was fastest, you know. They get to the gate and the gate locked, so he just shoot the lock, and the gate open.

Q: Got it. Okay. And so you – th-the Americans come in.

A: Americans came in. But that was evening, and they told us by German translator, that this it the – it was tank, German – American tank. That is the first tank ahead – so ahead of us are still Germans.

Q: Okay.

A: So stay overnight here, and tomorrow it depends on the situation, if he will tells you you can go or not. You are all free. So we stay in the camp overnight, and next

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

morning the tanks – well, the gates were – gate was open, you know. So the tanks are on their way, and next – many tanks after the first one. So we – then we get out and I went to – in the town, and I ran into Polish camp, several hundreds Poles, after uprising in **Warsaw**.

Q: Ah, yes.

A: They were sent there, and they were working in – in various places in this little town. And it turned out that the town had many food warehouses. So they were wor – pardon me – they were working in – in various warehouses, and – and – and some food factories in the town.

Q: You said food warehouses?

A: Food warehouses, yeah.

Q: Yeah, mm-hm, okay. So those were pretty good jobs to have.

A: Yeah, well sure, they have – after the **Warsaw** uprising.

Q: Did you know –

A: So I joined them and with them, so –

Q: Did you know about the uprising? Cause you were already arrested.

A: I was in **Buchenwald**. We know – we learn about because one day we noticed that the **SS** toward us became quite rough, you know. So what? But, as I said, we

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

had, in **Buchenwald** was strong communist underground organization. So, from them we learn that **Warsaw** uprising, it is –

Q: Going on.

A: – uprising in **Warsaw**, and this is the reason the Germans are so tough to us.

Q: Okay. So you joined this group of people who had been sent to labor camps –

A: Yeah.

Q: – who had been part of this **Warsaw** uprising. And where did you go?

A: Yeah. Well, we stayed there. I told myself I got the – enough German concentration camp, I don't want try Soviet concentration camps, because I know that they are not better, and on top of that, they are in much colder places. Because **Siberia** is much colder than **Germany**. So I decided to – not to go back. And although I've got family there, my first love was there. But here I was afraid because I was in underground press, and I was on black list among the – with the communists, you know. Is anti-communist and anti-Soviet. And so, I don't know, we – I didn't stay with them too long, then I joined some – they were for – organized displaced person camps. And they were to transfer, you know, some camp. Oh, we – I stay for a while, and then this place was taken by Soviets. They – it was freed by Americans, but this part supposed to be British zone. But in last – just before the war ended, they decided in the campgrounds just before the war

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

ended, that this part will be Soviet zone. It will be handed to Soviet zone because Soviet get too small part of **Germany**.

Q: Okay.

A: So it was – the further was – so the British told us about, and they even organized transport for us to get out even, you didn't want. Some who want to go back to **Poland**, they stayed there and wait until Soviets arrive, and I don't know what happened to that, but we get out to west, on the British zone, so we stay as – stayed, then I – well, I – we get to this – I mentioned this little town, **Seesen**, a very nice town and it turned out there were many thousands of Poles from **Poland** during the war that can do work in German factories in those warehouses and so on. And so we get there, and not long, and because they put u – put us in hotel by the railroad, and they will sh – they were o-opening the – a railroad, and they went to open the hotel, too. So they transfer us someplace else. So I – I was not too far – well, in this town, there were – there was thousands of Poles, and we had no information. So I get contact not too far away, was first Polish Panzer division from **Great Britain**, who occupy northwestern part of **Germany**. So I got contact with them, and I came to conclusion that we need something to [indecipherable] so I will publish – edit again, bill – bulletin, and we'll – I will get through that, from

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

them, some information. And so I started that, and in one of the bulletin, I brought – there was t – **Potsdam** conference, between **Stalin** –

Q: The f – yeah, the four powers.

A: Yeah, three powers.

Q: Three powers, yeah.

A: **Stalin, Churchill** and **Roosevelt**. And **Churchill** was replaced by **Attlee** because during the time was election –

Q: Elections, yeah.

A: – and **Churchill** lost the par – par [**indecipherable**] conservative party, lost the power, and **Attlee** replace him, socialist. And I wrote that – but that is this time still **Churchill** was there. I – I was surprised that **Truman** – then **Churchill** and **Truman** talked to some bandit like hit – like **Stalin**, who is not better than **Hitler**.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, I wrote true. But couple weeks later, I was preparing next edition, and my room knocked the door. I look, **British MP**.

Q: Oh my.

A: [**indecipherable**] And I didn't speak English, but he knows some few words in German, that I am arrest – arrested.

Q: By the British?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: By Brit-British m-military police, yeah. And they took me to this – again, this little town, **Seesen**, where there was a jail. And so they put me in – in – well, first to the head of the jail, the German – the German – jail was German some – the guards and everything, all the administration was German. So when they sent – they brought me – guard brought me on second floor, and put me in some – opened some door, and there were three or four prisoners, and they were criminals, you know, for crimes, various crimes. And so I knocked the door back and said this guard to return. What? I am political prisoners, I can be not –

Q: With them, right.

A: – I – I should be separately, not with the criminals. So, let's go to the head of the jail. So you know, the guy said – German said, well, I don't have room. This is your problem, not mine. After spending, you know, years in tortures of Gestapo and a year in a concentration camp, that was, for me, like sanitorium, you know, not jail.

Q: Yeah.

A: And that – besides that, I noticed that the Germans didn't know what to do with me. Political prisoners of his majesty, King of **England**. Because this was – I was political prisoner.

Q: Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: So here I got the two number from **Auschwitz**, so they know what **Auschwitz** was. So they were completely lost, Germans.

Q: And did you –

A: And at the same time, they were still the beginning of occupation, they didn't know what will happen to them, you know. So, they didn't know what to do with me.

Q: So what did they do?

A: Well, they sent me, as I said, to the – to **[indecipherable]** get back. So – so they – he walk me back on the second floor and put me – left me on the corridor. So I was walking from one window on the one end of the building, to next window on the next end of the building. You know, the cells were on the sides, and I walked –

Q: Back and forth.

A: – back and forth. So finally, they open – they open – they clear some cell, and they walk me in. And, okay – alone. So – and I look at the w – the walls, and walls of – always in jails are full of var – various prisoners left some abo – you know, about them or some – some – wrote something. And among all the Germans, it was one in Polish. Translating it, here – here was the name and ad – and last name and first name, for – because he'd get away chicken from German farmer.

Q: Because he stole a chicken from a German farmer.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: He take away, because –

Q: He took it away.

A: – Germans took his chicken. He had a little farm, and Germans took his chicken.

Q: Okay.

A: So when he was sent to **Germany**, he –

Q: Took a chicken.

A: – [**indecipherable**] so he get this chicken – chicken from German farmers. Well, they arrested him that he steal, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: I thought that was the –

Q: And so the story was on the wall?

A: And the story was on the wall.

Q: Wall, yeah.

A: So – and then they come – he – that guard came again. And again we went downstairs to the office. And this – the guy in charge of the jail, the head of the jail, ask me if I – he – if I consider that they treat me badly or something. I say no. I got no-nothing. You do your job, I understand that. I am st – all prisoners, you know, so I know things. And he said, because you know, because the – we have some problem here, maybe we – you can help us. He o – he open – not open the window,

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

but the curt – curtain, you know. And there was thousands of Poles that the jail, they learn I was publishing this little bulletin, so they know – the news spread that Germans arrested our editor.

Q: The Germans or the British arrested –

A: Well, they didn't know, the British, that the German arrested –

Q: Arrested our editor.

A: – and I am in jail. So they – thousands of them came to jail. And the German guide was a fr – they didn't know, you know, beginning of occupation, they didn't know what will happen.

Q: What to do, yeah

A: What will happen. So – so I said, no problem. So I went with the guard to the – th-the – the gate, the – on big – at the end of – the entrance to the jail, was little, you know, like a veranda, or whatever you call it. And so some few people walk in, delegation, and so I told them, no the Germans, the British. And so

[indecipherable]. Well, they will bring me food, dinner here, if –

Q: Okay.

A: Well, I said, there's not my – so the guard went to it and say oh yes –

Q: You are allowed to get –

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – allowed meat, or get this food from them. So we are – we are wis – I was sitting – guard was sitting, but guard was waiting – watching if the British –

Q: Don't see.

A: – the Americans don't come.

Q: Okay.

A: You know. And I was sitting with this delegation talking, while this thing, and then later they brought me good food, you know, they make then dinner. And so I – there's dinner, and I told you, and don't make trouble, because they are not deciding that, the – the Americans are deciding –

Q: I thought you said the British are deciding it.

A: British are deciding that, yeah.

Q: So what, I – and this was in **Seesen**, a – a town –

A: **Seesen**, a little town **Seesen**.

Q: **Seesen**.

A: **S – s-e-s – two – double e, n.**

Q: Okay.

A: **Seesen**.

Q: And so what did – what happened? Did the – what did the British do?

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Well, next day – ne – while I sleep overnight in the jail, next day again British came, and they pick me up on **Jeep**, and we went to villa in this town – I became to know this town because of that, among other things. A nice villa, leading – on the road leading to this good – **Harz** mountains. This road we walk, it is dead march few – couple weeks before. And –

Q: How life changed.

A: Yeah. And to villa, and there was the British some – I don't know what **[indecipherable]** probably the secret service, or whatever they have – and some Russian – White Russian, who left **Russia** when the **Bolshevik** took over the power.

Q: Okay.

A: And so he settle in **Germany**, and in German language he was translating. And when I learn that he is Russian, I told him I am not going to answer, because I don't trust Russians. And ru – honestly.

Q: Yeah, okay. And –

A: And so – so he told that this English guy, and this English guy, according to him, translator, if not, they don't have any Polish interpreter, so I will sit in jail. My answer was, I sit two years in Germans, so I can sit also in British.

Q: Mm-hm. Jail.

A: Jail.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: And – and so, what happened?

A: They walk me back to jail.

Q: And they couldn't find –

A: And I know that they have interpreter –

Q: Of course.

A: – because in the camp which I was living, and publishing this little bulletin, was family named **Grabowska**(ph) from **Poznan**, but they were kicked out in 1939 to **Warsaw**, so they – after the **Warsaw** uprising, they were in **Germany**. And the daughter study English before the war at the University of **Poznan**. And she was working in the office of British general, commander of the occupied part of this territory. So she was working this – in Polish-English interpreter. So I know her because this family, this – her mother practically save my life, because when we get – we get [**indecipherable**] in this, you know, people get very hungry. So I just happened, by accident that I get to them. And she told me, no, no, I will s – feed you. So she wouldn't let me eat, you know, any f – meat or any fat stuff, chicken soup or something, but she prepare something, or – or, you know –

Q: Right.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – something else, because she know that – and some prisoners, like myself, get – they eat whatever, they got it and they were hungry, they eat too much, and they went – they died.

Q: Yeah, they died. Their systems couldn't take it.

A: The system cannot take it, because system was not prepared for, for a long time.

Q: So – so – so you're back in this prison, you know they have a Polish interpreter, then what ha –

A: Yes.

Q: – then what happens?

A: So I didn't told him. He's the **[indecipherable]** he's the power, I am not.

Q: Okay.

A: So they want me back to – you know. After the Gestapo, after the tortures, and the concentration camp, and this situation was like sanitorium, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, they took me back and few hours – couple hours later, they come to pick me up. And they walk me to same room, same villa, and here in place of the Russian, is **Bouzhayna(ph) Grabowska(ph)**, this Polish interpreter.

Q: Yeah. Then what were their questions?

A: Well, the question was that I am Nazi.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: That you're Nazi?

A: Yes.

Q: And why would you be a Nazi?

A: Because I wrote that **Stalin** is not better than **Hitler**, and **Stalin**, Uncle **Joe** is the best friend, you know.

Q: Okay. Okay, and so they ask you – what do they ask you?

A: Well, they ask me an – so then this tattoo number of my arms, that I was in concentration camp. You know, this British, he didn't know it the beginning, but the **Bouzhayna**(ph) **Grabowska**(ph) explained to him that this is tattoo number from **Auschwitz**, concentration camp **Auschwitz**. Well, he know, already hear something about concentration camp **Auschwitz**, so he was confused, you know. And he start, you know, beginning; name, born, and this – parents and all this. Form – formal things, and then what was – what I was doing during the war, and so on. So I wi – was telling him. And then we start talking about this problem of Nazi and – and so Uncle **Joe**. So I tell him point blank, maybe these – it – he is your friends, but he is not our friends. I was in Polish military 1939. We fought Germans, and we were – we were hit in the back by **Stalin**, by Soviets. So for me, **Stalin** is not better than **Hitler**. And nobody will convince me that this is not so.

Q: And so, what did he do?

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: So, the things change into discussion about politics, foreign relations in – in **Europe**, you know. And because I was good in history, and always interested in politics, so I know quite a bit about it. Probably more than him. And –

Q: Probably.

A: And so he start discussion, and that. So then finally, I was smoking, you know, so I ask him if I can sm-smoke. He says okay. So I si – I had Canadian **Pall Mall**, very good cigarettes, and he got some **British**, very lousy cigarettes, I know that – them, too. So – so he smoked – he pulled his, and I s – so we smoke our cigarettes. And then we start talking. After a while I again ask him where I can si – fr – smoke, okay. So I pull, and I si –

Q: Offer him.

A: – give him – offer him cigarettes. He took it, and he says, you got good cigarettes. And so we smoked cigarettes. So the – then into – you know, friendly conversation. Then – and then he said – tell me there's no – I can't – I know there's no mi-mis – misconce – mis – not misconception, misleading, something like that.

Q: Misunderstanding?

A: Misunderstanding. But I cannot do it, I can only [**indecipherable**] I just make a report, and they will decide, the highers-up will decide. And then, from this

Bouzhayna(ph) Grabowska(ph) who was interpreter with the general office, day

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

or two days later, I learn from her that this, what I wrote about, **Stalin, Hitler**, you know, not better, it went to Polish representative in town – town about 40 kilometers north, where was Polish mission. The mission of the Polish communists, you know.

Q: Oh, of the Polish communists.

A: The Polish communist government, you know –

Q: Okay.

A: – mission. About 40 kilometers, and they get this, my bulletin, with this terrible –

Q: Comparison.

A: – comparison, you know. So naturally they send this – rush to their superiors in **Warsaw**, and they to **Moscow**. So the **Bouzhayna**(ph) learned that it went from **Moscow** to **London**, and from **London** to – because this guy [**indecipherable**] told me tho – there was – the commander of the occupied forces, British occupied forces. So – so next day or so, they took me again, and he told me that I am free. And I said well, how I will get home these 14 kilometer, no trains nothing.

Q: Yeah.

A: Oh, there's no problem, we can – and so she told me that – oh, he – he – this was misunderstanding or something like that, and so ga – ga – gra – **Bouzhayna**(ph)

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

learned that it went to commander of the **Rhine** army, the British so-call **Rhine** army, that was the name of the **Rhine** army, and it get to this guy, inter – they arrested him.

Q: Oh, it get to the guy who arrested you –

A: Yeah.

Q: – to begin with.

A: Yeah.

Q: And so it went from the Polish communist 40 miles north, to **Warsaw**, to **Moscow**, to **London** –

A: To **London**, and from **London** back to **Germany**.

Q: And then the – that's how you had gotten arrested?

A: Yes. So little devil never was angel.

Q: Interesting though. Very interesting, you know.

A: Well, it was interesting that – that –

Q: And was the war over by this point?

A: Oh yes, yeah.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah, there was occupation already.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay, because when you were reli – when you were freed, the war was still on.

It was just that you were liberated.

A: Well, yes, but not t-too long. Shortly after th-the – it was – the war was over.

Q: Okay. And how long did you stay in a **DP** camp?

A: Well, I don't know. I was moving from one to a next one. So finally I moved to – well, because after th – I was arrested by the British of this bulletin, they told me I cannot publish any more. So I told him, how about freedom of press, you know?

Q: That's right.

A: And he told – he told me, this is in **England**, not in occupied **Germany**. Here, o – here the law is given by the commander of **Rhine** army. This is – I learned the official name of the army, occupied army, British army. So I went to British – to American zone.

Q: Okay.

A: So they – they was not right now, but in the spring of 1946, group of Polish journalists, and this paper even we get in British zone once in while, weekly, “**Polska**” was the title. Very well edited, and so on, in **Ludwigsburg**. And I'm – I met somebody, became friends, who was also interested in journalist, and he has wife, and they got little child. And so we were in the camp, that was bad situation, and we got no food, we – and so on, but there was no life, no – so he went, and he

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

knew the editor of this ed – ed – so, he says, and they are not in **Ludwigsburg**, they are in **Eppstein** town, as he learned, his chief editor is little town north of **Frankfurt**, and they publish in **Ludwigsburg** because in **Ludwigsburg** is [indecipherable] which have Polish accent, you know. And so he went to visit with them, and he spent about two or three days. He return back and says to me, we both – we are going, they will accept us. Me and – and you. And okay, I was happy. So – but he is going to stay in **Eppstein** town is where they got – they rented from Germans, little hotel. And **Eppstein** town as – is not large, not all mountains – range of mountains is north of **Frankfurt am Main**, the largest is – is about 8-900 meters. So there's about 2,700 or so feet. But nice territory. And they r-r-rented one, this hotel – hotel in those mountains, in this little town, and paid Germans with food, with cigarettes and so on. And they call it po – house of Polish journalists. There were few of them, couple with wives. So he is going to live in this house of Polish journalists, and I am going to **Ludwigsburg** to help the editor who make the pages, and [indecipherable] news, and print over there, get –

Q: Okay.

A: – and get to print this thing. So – and it was very good school, because this guy, he was very good. He was consider one of the arts in making pages, you know.

Make layered of pages.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Right.

A: He was very good in that. And so I got good school with him. So I went there. Well, not too long, my birthday was June 15, but I'd – in **Poland** they – we don't tra – celebrate birthday, but names day.

Q: Right.

A: And names day is 24, June 24. So I – I prepare a birthday party with this – my fellow editor, my mentor. And he was married, and was not a guy for cigarettes. I got dinner in German farmer's home. Germ – from German farmer's ho – good dinner, you know, in farm. And so we were preparing, and we were printing in morning, the weekly. And here we got, I don't know, a few thousand ready, and the ger – the American [**indecipherable**] stop the press. They – whatever was printed, they get the ink, you know, and spread, so we cannot –

Q: Pull it.

A: – we cannot use them any more, send them to nobody. And not – they don't know – because we were Nazi – Nazi.

Q: Because you're Nazis?

A: Nazi. So, well, no other solution. So the guy, this editor, my mentor, as I said, very good. He was married, so he got already some room in the village there, Germans. So he stay, he didn't want to go back, because they don't – the place was

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

full, this little hotel was full, and so he stayed over there. But I went there, back. They told me to come back. So I went back, and no, that is it. But shortly after, we were consider a small camp. There were altogether us about 13 - 14 people, because couples, and there were some married, two or three that were –

Q: All journalists, or families – and families.

A: – couple were married. They were – one woman, she was – she was not the journalist, but she was very useful because she was drawing, you know.

Q: Right.

A: And so she was helpful, very – like the first page, you know, especially some drawing on first page. And so 12 - 13 people. We were consider a small camp. And **UNRRA**, this international organization which supply food for the displaced person camps, we – supply us with food, with – with clothing, and whatever they have. And they notify us because we are Nazi, we are taking – they don't supply us any more. So we went as Germans, thousand calories a day, but we have to buy that food, and we have no money, bu – from where? Buy the food from Germans. So it was quite –

Q: So there was the Americans now – instead of the British, it was the American **MP**?

A: Americans, because Uncle **Joe Stalin**, they were Uncle **Joe** –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: – you know, Uncle **Joe**. And so it was bad situation. So we get some money, and we get th-the – in we – they – two, three times a – a week, we got herring, because they went to buy from the barrels, you know. They were cheap, and so with potatoes, we have dinner [**indecipherable**] because we cannot afford to [**indecipherable**]

Q: And you like herring.

A: I like, so it was no-not bad for me. I – I got nothing against, but these others didn't like it.

Q: I want to – I want to summarize this a little bit. What you're saying is that you worked on a weekly Polish newspaper.

A: Yeah.

Q: And that Polish newspaper was also again critical of the **Soviet Union** –

A: Yes.

Q: – and eventually the American **MPs** come and close it down, accusing you of being Nazis, so you can't publish the paper any more.

A: No.

Q: And the reason that you're giving is that the influence of the Soviets – that is, as you put it, Uncle **Joe**, reached into the American zone. And –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Look –

Q: Okay.

A: – the Americans at that time, American opinion, American press, Mr. **Roosevelt** were all full of praise to [**indecipherable**]. American soldiers, I hear from American soldiers, Uncle **Joe**.

Q: Okay.

A: They do – they didn't tell – they didn't talk about **Stalin** otherwise but Uncle **Joe**. Well, you have to admit that Soviet army break – broke – broke the power of **Hitler**. That is not question about that.

Q: Okay.

A: But they did not do that because they were against **Hitler**, or because they love Americans. But **Hitler** attacked them, and they have – **Stalin** had no choice, surrendered, or fo – fight. So he decided to fight. And now American and British jump to help him, and a – not just help him, but embrace him. And the communist propaganda took over press and everything in **England** and in brit – **Great Britain**, and in everywhere else. And therefore, **Stalin** was Uncle **Joe**.

Q: All right. So, when the Americans closed you down, the American military authorities –

A: Yeah.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: – do you believe they were doing it because you were – you were being not only critical, but you were attacking an ally of theirs?

A: Well, this is what they told us, that we are Nazis, because we are working to break the alliance, you know, spread between the – the get –

Q: Dissension between the a –

A: Dissension between allies. This was the – th-th-the reason.

Q: And they didn't understand, or they didn't see a difference that you were coming from **Poland**, and had your own experience.

A: No, they don't understand that, and as I said, I was in Polish army when we fought Germans, and we were attacked for Soviets. So I had on my back proof, and what I believe it is right. But they didn't know that. Well, as I said, you have to admit that the Soviet army really broke the power of **Hitler** army.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: You know.

Q: Okay.

A: The ar – th – **Normandy** would be probably two years later, and with il – will cost thousands more of lives, American, British lives, if not the Soviet's army. That is true. But as I said, th-they don't fight, because for – because they were against, or something, but they had no choice –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: – because **Hitler** attacked them and –

Q: Okay.

A: – and they – and they –

Q: But what I'm getting at, or what I want to try and clarify is, the first time that your little newspaper, that you published yourself –

A: Yeah.

Q: – then you are arrested in the British zone.

A: Yeah.

Q: The reason why you were arrested is that it went to the Polish communists, it went to **Warsaw**, it went to –

A: No, well they – you know, because the communists took that –

Q: Yes, yes.

A: – you know, th – they were not too far away.

Q: Yeah, let me finish the question.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. That it went – that – and in – one could make the argument that it was Soviet influence that made your arrest happen, because it went from the Polish

Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

communists, to **Warsaw**, to **Moscow**, to **London**, to **Germany**, and you would be arrested by the Brits, yes?

A: Well, the British didn't know, they don't read Polish, so they would not know what I am writing there.

Q: Okay.

A: So, it went, you know, this way, and to embassy – Soviet embassy in **London**, to the British government, and British government to the commander of **Rhine** army, and so on. That was the –

Q: Okay, but one can make the argument that it was Soviet influence, Soviet pressure.

A: Yes, yes, yeah.

Q: The second time, when the Americans come and close down this newspaper, would it be Soviet pressure, or would it be that the Americans don't want to offend the Soviets and do it on their own?

A: Well, that was – it was not direct – it was not, you know, through the diplomatic channels, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: It was probably some higher-ups in American government in – occupying forces

–

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: – and this **UNRRA**, who take the –

Q: Rations away.

A: – rations for us. We learn later this director of **UNRRA**, in this American zone, was American communist.

Q: Ah, okay.

A: You know.

Q: Okay.

A: So, you know, the politics, it – it has various quite interesting angles.

Q: Yes, yes. And so your paper is closed, and you have no rations.

A: No rations, yeah.

Q: So what happens?

A: So what happened? As I said, we got herrings. I didn't mind my – I didn't mind – I like herrings. But not – a couple weeks later – well, Polish – there was a large Polish army in the west, in **Italy**, from those who – Poles who were in **Soviet Union**, taken to **Soviet Union**, and when war break out, **Stalin** release them –

Q: Right.

A: – and they form this second Polish [**indecipherable**] what fought at **Monte Cassino**, and so on, and there was – before that there was Polish [**indecipherable**],

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

a division which participated in **Normandy**, and occupy northwestern **Germany**. It was Polish air forces which have great part in this battle of **Britain** – air battle, and the participation of Polish units, and on British airplanes –

Q: Right.

A: – naturally. But with Polish [**indecipherable**] and also Polish pilots on British airplane. They got – they got more planes than pilots.

Q: Got it.

A: And so they participated and they really – the British now, they also admit that, that the – they aro – they won the battle of **Britain** with – the air battle with **Britain** wi – on – for **Britain**, and the Poles participated greatly in that. And so – so this was –

Q: So di – so, in other words, what di – what significance did that have on the fact that your paper was closed? Did du – did it influence it?

A: Well, you mean th –

Q: Yeah, I – okay, here – let me go back. I asked you, after the paper was closed, what happened. And then you mentioned –

A: What happened –

Q: Okay.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – well, so they took away – arrest you, and so on – and but couple weeks later, one day there was Polish major from the Polish army in **Great Britain**, I think he was in intelligence unit, he joined us. And some – quite often in civilian clothing, he was going somewhere, and so on. We didn't ask him, but he was – it was good to have military person, officer major with – so, e-even Germans, you know, we got different situation there. So, he was in uniform, going somewhere, and we had this, our poor dinner – poor lunch rather, at noon, when it was on the hill, and **[indecipherable]** road, it go – goes like that, and through the window we saw some trucks coming. Well, truck, to us. No, nothing else was there, only our hotel. So here it came, the truck from the Polish second corps in **Italy**, which, there was over 80,000 Polish soldiers who took this **Monte Cassino** and so on. And so Major walk out, and from the – from the truck walks some sergeant in Polish uniform, report, give him piece of paper. **[indecipherable]** of Polish soldiers in **Italy**, to Polish journalists discriminated by allies. Honestly, it was this wording.

Q: Wow.

A: You know.

Q: Wow, so the news spread.

A: And so we got – we get whole truck full of ra – po – si – meat, those various c-
cons –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Conserves.

A: – cons – conserves.

Q: Well, canned foods, canned foods.

A: Canned food, then th – then the macaroni, and all different kind of food. So, we had supply for several weeks.

Q: Tell me, what was the name of this newspaper that was closed down?

A: “**Polska.**”

Q: Just “**Polska?**”

A: Yes, “**Polska.**”

Q: And that means?

A: And that is an interesting thing, that was happen in summer, and in December, this – our major, who was already formally with us, and the chief editor get letter that they should report in American government occupied forces in **Wiesbaden**, not far from where we live. So, okay, right after noon, one o’clock. So, we got to – some fellow who had already car, and he was our chauffeur, you know. And so he – they went with this guy to bi – **Wiesbaden**. And after noon we had the sup – dinner of the evening, and they didn’t show up. So what happened? Are – they were arrested, or what? So finally, we saw light, you know, coming, car was coming. So, nobody probably didn’t find it. So we all wek – wo – wake and get – get out from

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

the – the restaurant of this hotel was our dining room, you know. And so it was room for parking car, so the car arrived there, and our [**indecipherable**] he was quite heavy fellow, he was on front seat. He walk out drunk like hell.

Q: Drunk like a fish.

A: This – this paper, license number one to publish a paper.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. The politics in **Washington** change, and we, from Nazis, became the first s – well, friends. And we got number first, first nu – first license to publish a paper. And between – be-between Christmas and new yer – new year, in '46, we publish the first issue of “**Kronika**,” weekly paper, under title “**Kronika**.”

Q: Wow.

A: And that was published already in – in **Frankfurt** because there was a – th-they find the print shop in **Frankfurt** with Polish accent.

Q: So that means with Polish diacritic?

A: Diacritic, yeah.

Q: So that means between Christmas and New Year's, 1945?

A: 1946.

Q: 1946. So a year and a half after the war ends.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Yes, and – and few months after they close, they arrested, you know, and everything else.

Q: So – and what was the name of your very first paper, the one that you just published by yourself?

A: “**Biuletyn**,” “**Biuletyn**.”

Q: “**Biuletyn**.”

A: Yeah.

Q: And just that.

A: Just that.

Q: And wi – and you signed your –

A: “**Biuletyn Polski**.”

Q: Bol – “**Biuletyn Polski**?”

A: Yeah.

Q: And you had signed your name to it?

A: Yes.

Q: And the other one was “**Polska**?”

A: “**Polska**.”

Q: Does “**Polska**” stand for **Poland**?

A: Yes.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: This is Polish name wis – our country is **Polska**.

Q: Okay, **Polska**.

A: Yeah, and – but then “**Kronika**.”

Q: Then “**Kronika**.”

A: Yeah, but there was – too bad that there was Dr. **Rabic**(ph), he was doctor of something, politic science or something like that. All tha – all journalists, very good journalists, matter of fact.

Q: How many issues of “**Kronika**” did you publish?

A: I don’t know, we published that until 1949.

Q: Oh, a good three years.

A: Seven, eight, two years – about two and a half.

Q: Two and a half years.

A: Yeah, because when the **Germany** became inde – you know, by –

Q: Semi-independent.

A: – semi-independent, and the deutschemark – the new mark became valuable, we have to close the paper because our readers don’t have money to buy the paper.

Q: Okay. What kind of circulation did you have?

A: Oh, I don’t remember now that.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

Q: How many did you print?

A: We print probably 25 - 30,000.

Q: And it was every week?

A: Every week, yeah.

Q: Okay. And you never had anybody visit you again and arrest you, or call you Nazis?

A: Oh no, no, no. That was all be – already on the license with the government occupied forces, you know.

Q: Okay, okay. So –

A: And the pilot exchange, you know. We from Nazis became friends. Cold War started.

Q: Yeah.

A: The [indecipherable] politics is very interesting.

Q: Well, how interesting, how – how your identity changes. You were Nazis and now you're not.

A: Yes, I was Nazi with –

Q: With a thing from **Auschwitz**.

A: – with a number from **Auschwitz**, you know.

Q: Yeah. So, in mid-1949, the paper stopped because of the currency.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Yeah. Currency, we can't afford it, you know.

Q: So what did you do? What happened in your life?

A: Well, in the – shortly after I came to the **United States**, I get contact with my mother, her sister in chica – in **Posen**, south of **Chicago**. And so we start to corresponded. And matter of fact, one of the cousin came to me in **Eppstein** in this – when I was in this paper there. One day, some American soldiers on **Jeep** came, and soldiers get out and ask for me in Polish. So I get out. **Roman**. He was son of my aunt from **Posen**, serving in the American military. And so he get from her mother my address, and so he came to visit me.

Q: Isn't that a ma – your first cousin.

A: My first cousin, yeah.

Q: Yeah. When you came to the **United States**, how did you support yourself?

A: Well, I came to my aunt, and – but I don't want to be supported by anybody, so I tried to do some – anything to work. Well, first week or two in the family, there was my uncle here, and so on, so it was a lot of parties going on, drinking and so on. But then – so I start first my job, I had – I was unloading tomatoes. There was factory producing ketchup. And when the season started – so I work at night 12 hours, for night. Hour for lunch at no – at midnight, unloading trucks, boxcars from railroad, and so unloading them to the factory, as go. That was for the first time. Then I work

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

in the – in the outfit which repaired boxcars that – railroad t – railroad cars. But then I got – just about lost my eye because the spark from –

Q: From one of the wheels, or something?

A: Not wheels, the – no, how you call it? The guy li – I was walking between two boxcar, and he opened the torch, you know.

Q: Ah, okay.

A: Torch, and the spark j-jump. And so they took me to a doctor, and I get home with bandage my – my eye. My aunt said, no more. I don't want you to lose your eye here. We got sa – to eat sa – we got enough to eat. Well, I cannot sit home, it is not wi-with my nature. And so, through my uncle, I get job at **Canfield's**(ph) beverage company in **Chicago**. It was – you have to drive – not drive really, didn't have car, but take buses, you know, two buses to get there. And so I was working on the yard, they call it. It – from noon. So there was various – one of – every day **[indecipherable]** of time take, it was to sort enough bottles. Drivers brought and – gave this wooden bo-boxes, you know, with bottles, and th-they are mixed up, white and green, because in tavern, or in s – in store, if they give to the – he don't look the white or – or green bottles, he put in the case –

Q: Whatever.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – whatever, so there were white and green. And we sort them out, because green were ginger ale. All other – lemonade – all other drinks were in white –

Q: Bottles.

A: – white bottles. And only ginger ale was green, so we sort enough so they can go to production and – and know where. And then later we work to load the trucks with full cases of – of those drinks, help drivers to – help to – help – help drivers to load this – his trucks, so he put where he want, according to his schedule, you know, first go first and so on. He knows what he got next stop, next day, what he have to deliver, and to who. And so that was again interesting American story. One day Mr. **Canfield** junior, who run the factory, his father established that – he came every day for a few – for a few hours to office, and get chauffeur and so on, but **A-Art Canfield** was running the business. And one day he walk, and talk to the workers. And he came to me, I know few words in English, so what nationality? Polish. Oh hey – hey **Joe**, that was next truck, I know the guy, **Joe Horanian**(ph), I still remember his name, truck driver, and he was Polish. Bo-Born here, but speak Polish and English. So he came as interpreter, so **Canfield** said – a-ask me what I was doing in **Germany**. I said, a concentration camp. What you – when you came here? Forty-nine – that was – that was 1950, or sa – 1950 probably A-April, March,

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

April, something like that. So I was – what I was doing from '45 to '49. So I said, I was in – in newspaper, Polish newspaper. Yeah, I was, really –

Q: Mm-hm, yeah.

A: – in this – in this “**Kronika**.” So, said, what are you doing here? I says, well, it has the way of make living. One work, and next one they had ways to steal. I don't want steal, so I got no other choice but to work. So he says, **John**, you okay. Okay. Next day, the girl came from the office, they called me to the of – main office. So I went there, there was the telephone operator. She was of Polish origin, so speak – she speak English and Polish. And so he asked me if I drive. I di – I didn't. Do you know anything about motors, cars, [**indecipherable**] trucks? No. You want to learn? I said, I learn many thing, so maybe I can learn that too. Okay, tomorrow start in the garage as a mechanic helper. This was my career, and I became mechanic helper, and then I became mechanic. I have to join the union. But when I learn English [**indecipherable**] I decided to follow my journalist dreams. So I register at **Loyola** University for political science as background for journalist. And I went to Mr. **Canfield**(ph) because I have to, twice a week, quit sooner. Four o'clock I have to quit, change, and go to – for six o'clock – six o'clock –

Q: Classes.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: – classes at the **Loyola** Univers – they had main ca – in this downtown campus, across the old water tower in **Chicago** here. So – and Mr. **Canfield** says, well, it would be hard for us sometimes, because you know, [**indecipherable**] broke something, so we go to repair on the streets, sometimes far away, even. But, that is important to you, so he let me go. He let me do that. And so, after sometimes, four years or so, I finally get job in Polish – one of the Polish newspaper, as assistant editor, for very little in comparison with what I was making as – as journalist. But I wa –

Q: You mean as a mechanic.

A: As a mechanic.

Q: Yeah, okay.

A: Yeah, and so – but short – after sometimes, I get my Bachelor's degree from **Loyola**, and I quit this paper because I don't like politics of this paper. And I get job, very interesting, in **Cook** county by true friend of mine, was involved in pal – Republican party, and he gave me job in his [**indecipherable**] he was [**indecipherable**] at this time Republican elected, and as a bailiff **Cook** county jail.

Q: You were a bailiff in –

A: Court, in court.

Q: Court.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: I mean, in court. So the job was to bring prisoner to si – to the court – they – it was no problem because there was tun-tun-tunnel from the jail to – to the court. And then sit, keep him in the room there, and walk him out to the court, and sit behind him to make sure that he didn't jump –

Q: Right.

A: – you know, on – on judge, and so on. So it was interesting because we had many cases, you know.

Q: Yeah, sure.

A: Interesting cases. Then they changed swise – switch – cha-changed me to social worker, which was even more in-interesting; social worker in jail.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: Yeah. Very interesting job. Then they turn me to – switch me to women, because I was oldest of the social workers, so they came to conclusion that I will se – I'll be more safe – safer than some younger guys. And very interesting job, I learn many interesting situation in the life people have, problems and so on.

Q: And when did you come to work again as a journalist? You told me earlier you worked for 17 years –

A: Yes.

Q: – for a major Polish daily. Tell me about that –

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: As the chief editor.

Q: As chief editor.

A: So I ca – as I said, I came here, I worked for – in the Polish daily paper as assistant editor, but I don't like that, I quit, I work in jail, then in this –

Q: Social work.

A: – social worker in jail, then before that, three years for – in court as a bailiff. And then friend of mine, who give me those jobs in the court, became – he was elected – I work with him for several years – he was elected president of Polish National Alliance. And when he was elected poli – then president, and the Polish National Alliance owns a newspaper. And there was editor for many years, he was old already, he want to retire, but he was friend of the pres – pre-president of the organization, and they s – his friend asked him to keep the job, how long he is president. So when he lost the election, so he retired – this guy retired, and my **[indecipherable]** was elected president, nominated me chief editor of the paper then. I was already working some four years before in different paper, so I know **Poland** – Pol-Polish community already, the – quite good, and the **United States**, the politics and so on, because I study political science, I participated in some elections, I have some very good friends among politician. Yeah, one of them was Congressman **Darwinski**(ph). Republican, very smart fellow, very good, very

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

honest man. He was for 24 or 28 years congressman. Then I was in campaign of Senator **Percy**(ph), he wa – he was not senator when he first time ran – ran for – for senate. So I was in the – you know, in his campaign staff. So – so I was quite prepared for –

Q: Active, yeah.

A: – running the paper, you know.

Q: So tell me, what year did you start, and what year did you finish?

A: I – I fin – I worked 17 years. I finish the beginning of January, 1985.

Q: Oh, so you – that's when you finished.

A: Then I finished, and I retire. I was already 70 years – 65 – no, 66 years old.

Q: And now, 30 years later, it sounds to me like you're still going strong.

A: I don't know. I am still busy, I am still active. I was still writing for not too long ago.

Q: Mm-hm. And as I understand, you also – you also participate in the programs of the Holocaust museum in **Skokie**.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Tell me what you do there.

A: I am do – I am so-called survivor. When – when high school students go through the museum, at the end they met survivor. So I am one of those survivors, and I am

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

– I think I am the only one non-Jew. Now I learn there's another Polish fellow. But, they came to conclusion that those Jewish survivors sometimes they cannot tell them much, because they were hid – hidden somewhere by Poles, or by –

Q: Other people, yeah.

A: – Dutch, or whatever nationality the ne – country they were, an attic, or somewhere, and they don't know much what was going on. The only thing that they were there and somebody helped them to survive. So in **Poland** was death sentence for the whole family for helping Jews. And I know one case not too far from my village from – through relatives and so on. It was really family with six children. And they had two co – dra – Jewish cop. They got some on attic, you know, some – they stay right there. And – and they bring the food, you know, things like that. And I don't know how they get – the Germans get –

Q: The information.

A: – the information, but anyway, one morning they – German – Gestapo plus German police, surrounding their house. They get the Jews out, the whole family out on the yard. They shoot the Jews, then the children, starting from the oldest, and finishing on – on – on the youngest one, one year old, and then the parents. This the way was in **Poland** for helping Jews. And that is true, there's not – not story. It is fact. And there were more facts like that, not too many, but – but there were others.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

This I know through family, through – because there was in village not far away from the village where I was born.

Q: Tough. Tough.

A: Yeah, it was tough. And you know, so it is – and only in po – in other countries, for sa – helping Jew, there was concentration camp. I don't know why they got maybe because there was the large – the – in **Poland**, there were three and a half million Jews in **Poland** before the war, 10 percent of the population. And in addition, they – **Poland** was consider part of German **lebensraum**, the territory the **Germany** needs to create thousand years empire.

Q: Yeah.

A: According to **Hitler**. Well, so they exterminate Poles, not as Jews, you know, but because they were born. But they use any pre – pretext to kill Poles. They – but two millions Poles were taken to **Germany** to work in factories, and on farms. After the war bar – there were about two million Poles in **Germany**. So, in any condition, any pretext they have to kill, they did.

Q: How do you explain that you survived?

A: How do I explain? Well, I was lucky. That is probably the most important part. I was young, I – I was strong, and I was tough.

Q: Like you said in the beginning, there was a bit of a devil.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

A: Little devil, you know, it was little devil, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, it was will to live. It was important. But not for any price. The price we didn't want pay, it is to cooperate with Germans. And those who did, they were sorry, and quite often, ended their life later. There was a case – I don't know personally, but it – he wrote little book or – or something, story, right aft – shortly after the war. He was a Jewish fellow, Jewish policeman in Jewish ghetto, in some suburb of **Warsaw**. And he escorted his li – his wife and beloved nine, 10 years old daughter to the train going to **Treblinka**, to the gas chambers.

Q: I know the book.

A: Know – you know –

Q: I know the book, it was “**Otwock**.”

A: “**Otwock**,” yes.

Q: It was se – yes

A: Yes, “**Otwock**,” yeah.

Q: “**Otwock**.”

A: So you know what happened.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know.

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Q: So, I think we've come to the end of the road, as far as – well, we never could, we could talk for hours. I – I have – I have a –

A: That is – that is for sure, really.

Q: I have a feeling that there –

A: You know, I lived 95 years –

Q: There's a lot to say.

A: – so it is long live – long lives and lot of things happen.

Q: Yeah.

A: So I can talk 95 years.

Q: Good. But thank you for what you've shared with us today. I think that it's amazing, packed in, and – and thank you very much for all those memories and all those experiences, and what you learned from those experiences. It is varied, it is not – it is not in one line. There's so many things that you've talked about today, that were ironic, that you wouldn't expect, you know?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: Yeah, but – and yet, they happened.

A: Yeah.

Q: And it's important for us to know these things. So, do you have any final thoughts before we conclude our interview?

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January 29, 2015

A: Well, I don't know what, what.

Q: Okay. Then, thank you.

A: You remember not to do the same thing again, but I don't believe in very – I – I came to conclusion that humans are beasts, potential beasts.

Q: Yeah, potential.

A: Potential beasts.

Q: Potential.

A: Yeah. So I don't know if you can avoid that, you know. After the Holocaust, it happened in many countries again, after – until now.

Q: Yeah.

A: In many co – places.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, it happen in many places.

Q: Yeah.

A: So – well, shoot, it is good to – the young generation learn, so they, young generation learn about. Because that – it has some influence –

Q: Yes.

A: – on them. I have – I met some who don't believe in Holocaust. Jews.

Q: Who don't believe in the Holocaust?

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January 29, 2015

A: Holocaust, yeah. There was a book written by a Jewish fellow, I think from – he was in **DePaul** University, who wrote the book, it is a Holocaust business

[indecipherable]

Q: Ah, I know. It's **Finkelstein**(ph), I think.

A: Something like that, yeah.

Q: Like that, yeah, yeah.

A: And so I get –

Q: The Holocaust industry.

A: He – Holocaust industry, yeah, yeah.

Q: That's what it was.

A: Yeah. And I – before they got this building here in **Skokie**, they had – they rented. So it was a smaller place, and the room was for 60 chairs. So quite often we have to go to some schools, you know, large group, and talk to them in school. So that has some good part, because we c – it depends on the school how much time I get. Here I got half hours, you know. And over there, sometimes I get hour, sometimes even more. But here they go through museum, so they learn about the many things, you know, ghettos and things like that. Well, over there they don't do that, so I have to mention about that. I don't – I didn't know exactly what happened in ghetto, because I was not there. I know quite a bit, but this is not the same thing.

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Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015

And so it – I met some people, as I said, some teachers, who didn't believe it, and one time, when we were going out, me – sometimes teachers ask students to write their impression. So I had several of those letters, I don't know, maybe close to hundreds of them, and they sent later to me – they sent to Holocaust museum, and the mus – museum to me. And there were one or two letters, Jewish money – Jewish girl. She mentioned that, that she didn't believe [**indecipherable**] at home, they didn't believe. But then, when she saw non-Jew, Polish Catholic, who was in **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, and he got tattoo numbers, so he was there. And he said that what happened to Jews, that they went directly to gas chambers, so he decide – she believe now.

Q: That's an am – that is an amazing –

A: Yeah.

Q: That is an amazing transformation, and it shows the value of your showing –

A: Direct – direct –

Q: Yes.

A: – contact, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: I – I know it is important in **Poland**, for example, when I go to my high school, the history teachers always grab me, and talk to students, you know, about. And

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then I ask – go talk to students, how what – they said, well, you know, we learn that from the book, from – teachers told us and so on, but what, 70 years ago? For me, what is the difference, 70 or 200 years?

Q: It's true.

A: You know.

Q: It's true.

A: This is what he – exactly what that student told me. And here comes somebody alive, who said that he was beat, that he was afraid, that – you know, what happened to him, and he told us wha – it bring closer this whole history get closer to us.

Q: Which is also –

A: And this is my sense.

Q: This is true.

A: It makes sense.

Q: And this is why what you have shared with us today is so valuable, because through this testimony, many, many people will be able to hear it, and many, many people will be able to –

A: I don't know how many those things they've got already in Holocaust museum, in schools, because I went to school, they call me, some schools; American schools, some this Polish. Saturday, Polish language school, so they call me too, so I talk.

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**Interview with John Krawiec
January 29, 2015**

They put this on tape, or whatever, so it – I don't know in how many ka – how many copies, it went through internet.

Q: And here's another one. All right.

A: And here's another one.

Q: Okay, so with this we conclude the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Jan – John –**

A: **Jan, John**, doesn't mat –

Q: – **Krawiec – Krawiec?**

A: – does not ma – **Krawiec.**

Q: On January 29th, 2015.

Conclusion of Interview

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