

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Thaddeus Gubala**  
**January 27, 2015**  
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## PREFACE

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## **THADDEUS GUBALA**

### **January 27, 2015**

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Thaddeus Gubala**, or **Gubala**, as it is known now here in the **United States**, on January 27, 2015, in **Chicago, Illinois**. Thank you very much Mr. **Gubala**, for agreeing to meet with us today, and to share some of your experiences from the war, and from the postwar years. What I'd like to do is talk a great deal about the world, and the life that you had before any of these events, before the war started. So, I'm going to start at the very beginning. Could you tell me, what was your name at birth?

Answer: My name at birth – oh, first of all, I would like to thank you for coming and visiting my modest little hacienda, here in the Windy City.

Q: Thank you.

A: And my name originally was **Thaddeus Roman Gubala**, **L** with the little slash above.

Q: Okay. And what was your date of birth?

A: Date of birth was February 3<sup>rd</sup>, '29.

Q: So that means your birthday is coming up next week.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: In one week.

A: I will enter the – 86.

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Q: Congratulations.

A: Thank you.

Q: And where were you born?

A: I was born in **Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland**. This was **Hosia(ph) Street** three, the building is still existing there.

Q: Really?

A: This was – yes. Well, it was damaged during the uprising, but still, the structure is there. So whenever I visit **Warsaw**, I take a glimpse of that building. And during the occupation, actually, I didn't live in that area.

Q: You lived – you were elsewhere?

A: Yes. But a – my parish was a church, holy – holy – the **Alexander Church in Three Crosses Square in Warsaw**.

Q: Is that the center of town, or is that a little bit outside the center?

A: I would say it's close to center, yes, close to center, because the **Royal Tr-Track** starts from **Wilanów**, all the way to the old town in **Warsaw**, but this is part of that section that covers that distance. They call it the **Royal Track [speaks Polish]** This is in Polish. But **Nowy Świat**, the New World, actually started from that square, **Three Crosses Square**.

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Q: Okay. What kind of a building did you grow up in? Was it a huge apartment building, or single family –

A: No, it was in an apart – it was about five story building, five story building, yes.

Q: Built when, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or the 20<sup>th</sup>?

A: This was, I would say, 20<sup>th</sup> century already there, yes.

Q: Okay. And how modern was it? Did it have electricity, for example?

A: Oh, there were electricity, yes, electricity. We had the bathrooms –

Q: Running water.

A: Running water, yes, yes.

Q: Mm-hm, and plumbing, and all of that. So, it was a modern place.

A: Yes, it was a modern place. **Warsaw** is a – as it grew, during the time after the first World War, this was under the Tsarist **Russia**.

Q: That's right.

A: But then, when **Pilsudski** came to power in 1918, **Poland** regained her independence, after 123 years of nonexistence, so to speak, of – **Poland** only existed only as partitions.

Q: Yes.

A: **Poland** was divided actually into three segments, and this was Prussian, Russian, and Austro-Hungary. So actually, **Warsaw** was part of the Tsarist domain.

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Q: So, when **Poland** became independent again, and the three parts became united, 123 years is still quite a while, because it is more than living memory. Several generations are comprised in that. Had people changed very much? Could you understand one another – I mean psychologically?

A: Well, there were different, let's say, frames that the Poles grew, that say, Germans were very anti-Polish, and **Hakatay**(ph) was the organization that even forbade the Polish language to be used at schools.

Q: Okay.

A: Russians were also trying to bring their influence to the point. And then, the most tolerant part was the au – aus – aus – aus –

Q: Austro-Hungarian?

A: Aust-Austro-Hungarian part. Yeah, so that was was a – a little better for schooling, secondary schooling and so on. And let's say Poles from **Galicia**?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: You know, they were a little different in character than let's say, Poles that were slightly Germanized under the ger – the Prussian operation, and the Poles living under the Russians. So, this process of fusing us together was actually a great, let's say, accomplishment of the Catholic church, because they mostly – the Poles were of Catholic faith, and that was – the church was actually the strongest party that

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existed in – in **Poland**. But then when **Pilsudski** became the Marshall of **Poland** – this was in 1914, and officially **Poland** regained her independence in the '18, he was assigned a task of, let's say, fusing th-the different characters of people that grew in different segments of the country.

Q: So what were some of the – I mean, just curiosity – you say the **Galicianas** are different than those who were – and **Galicia** was under Austro-Hungarian rule?

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of character did the one have in comparison to the other two, and so on?

A: Let's say the – the – let's say the Germans, Poles, from the German part, from the Prussian part were, let's say, a little bit more like Germans, very orderly, let's say the work that they accomplished was more thorough than let's say the group of Poles in the east, under the Russians. And let's say the Galicians were also a little bit closer to – to – to – to German influence. But all together, united by the faith, you know, we were very quickly re – **reborn**(ph).

Q: Reborn.

A: Reborn, yes, reborn.

Q: Yeah. And tell me a little bit – so, there are questions that I usually ask people who were in the eastern territories, that don't apply here, but I will just bring them

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up. And that is, one of the – the issues that I want to find out about is the degree of modernization. So there I will ask, you know, did anybody have a radio? Did anybody have a telephone? Did they ha – did – were cars – automobiles common to see? Well, in the center of **Warsaw**, I would assume that these things –

A: Yes, the **Poland** was called – they called **Poland** at that time – the **Warsaw** was the – the – the **Paris** of the east.

Q: Okay.

A: That was – city was about one point two million people. And there – there was, let's see, very large Jewish diaspora in **Warsaw**. The diaspora was about 400,00, so every third **Warsawian** was of – of Hebrew faith. Some of them got more or less Poland-ized, then the – they were, let's say, getting with the Poles closer, and the other ones were dep – **Poland** was free, as far as the religion is concerned, so they had their ow-own synagogues, they had their own traditions, and they grew in the environment that their predecessors are sort of giving them. But –

Q: Did you – mm-hm, go ahead.

A: And **Warsaw** – **Warsaw** was specially – some districts of **Warsaw** were predominantly Jewish. The most famous synagogue was the synagogue on **Tlomackie** Street. Now, if you ever visit **Warsaw** at that area, was – actually is a



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skyscraper about 40 stories high, a blue building that was, let's say built after the war, in that area where that synagogue was.

Q: Is there –

A: And this was the most beautiful synagogue in the world, the largest, and –

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: Even though you weren't Jewish – you aren't Jewish, did you ever visit inside?

Did you ever –

A: Oh, my father – my father was always very, how should I say, trying to show me the – the **cerkiew**, which is the Orthodox church, we had one big chur – **cerkiew** in **Praga**. Because **Praga** is not the Czech **Prague**, it's a – **Warsaw** was on the left bank of the **Vistula**, looking north was **Warszawa**, was **Warsaw**. On the right side was **Praga**.

Q: So it was like a – a district of **Warsaw**, a section of **Warsaw**.

A: Well yes, th-the eastern part, you know, the bridges connected the city together.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And there was a **cerkiew**, there was the Russian Orthodox church. And very often he took me over to show the – how they pray, and how they, let's say, celebrate their different religious –

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Q: Services.

A: – services. And there was a – in – in **Warsaw** I visited synagogues from time to time. Actually in my classroom, I had many Jewish friends that especially – **Thursdays** were the days when they were teaching us religion; history of the Catholic churches, or at that time the – the Jewish minority was excused, they could take a walk into the park, play soccer, or whatever. **[phone ringing]**

Q: Let's cut. **[break]** So, you were talking about something very interesting.

A: Th-Thursday –

Q: Oh, hang on a minute, let's –

A: Okay.

Q: Yeah, you were talking about Thursdays at school.

A: Thursdays at school. So, the – let's say, students, pupils that were excused for that day, of Jewish faith, you know, so very often I – I – I joined them just to be out in the park, and play soccer. That –

Q: I was – yeah, I was going to say, weren't you jealous of those kids who didn't have to go to class?

A: That's right, you know, so I was what, eight, seven – seven, eight years old, so at that time it was okay.

Q: So, did you ever visit this beautiful synagogue you told us –

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A: Yes –

Q: – when you were [indecipherable]

A: – I visited that synagogue. Yes, this was in 1936 or '37, yeah, with my father.

Q: So you were bor – yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you have –

A: Nowadays – nowadays they have **Tlomackie** Street, and there is a – a Jewish, let's say library, and – and a small museum, because the main museum that was erected just th – one year ago, open up, it's one of the most beautiful, modern museum, they spend a lot of money. And I think the – the help came from the good, old **U.S.A.**, you know, so – and then fa – I think contribution was also made by the Polish president to build in the area where they have **nalewki(ph)**, and that was that infamous **Umschlagplatz**. That's was the – the Jews were loaded on the trucks, and taken over to **Treblinka**. So this was ex-Jewish district.

Q: So, was the **Umschlagplatz** within the space of the ghetto, or outside of it?

A: **Umschlagplatz** was on the periphery of ghetto, you know, but it was inside, inside yes.

Q: It was inside, but at the edge.

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A: And the railroad tracks at **Stawki**, there were, I think five tracks that the trains were coming in, because there was a – sort of like a 10 – 10,000 – 10,000 a day were trying to unload from **Warsaw** and send them to **Treblinka**.

Q: So when – when – when Jews were being loaded onto – you'd say trucks, and then to trains, or how would they be –

A: No, they were – they were – they were walking toward the tra – **Umschlagplatz**. There were no trucks actually in the ghetto, no.

Q: Okay.

A: They were streetcars, but they were not used. Normally the cruel police force were the actually Jewish police, because they were obliged to bring the contingent of so many Jews for that particular day, that were shipped to **Treblinka**.

Q: So they would go by foot to the **Umschlagplatz**?

A: But foot, with – they were normally told that they are going east for some places that they will be employed and work for the upkeep of their own lives, and so on. So they were – they were lied about this designation of **Treblinka**, because this was the end of the trip, so to speak, of –

Q: Yeah. And it was by train?

A: By train, yes.

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Q: By train. Now, you say this was within the ghetto – the ghetto itself, but on the periphery. Did you ever see anything like this, were you able to see it?

A: No, I – let's see. I had my school located – let's start from a different point.

There were two ghettos actually. There was small ghetto, south of **Wolska** Street, which was main thoroughfare through **Warsaw**.

Q: Okay.

A: And there was a large ghetto north of it.

Q: Okay.

A: And normally they build a wall around small and large ghettos, so this whole area was isolated. Along the **Wolska** Street, between **Wronia** and **Żelazna**, this was a point where two ghettos were –

Q: Connected?

A: – connected, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: And they were also at the place like **Żelazna** and **Chłodna**, this was a bridge that was connecting small ghetto with large ghetto. That bridge you could see in that film of pianist, by –

Q: That's right, by **Roman Polanski**.

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A: **Polanski**, yes. This bridge I remember well, and that portion of wall, and the main gate to the ghetto, I remember very well because my school was like – during the occupation, you know, the secondary schooling was forbidden for the Poles.

Q: Okay.

A: **Hitler** wanted us only to know how to count to a hundred, write and read, and that's it. And we were designated for what they call **konnektenvolk**(ph).

Q: **Konnektenvolk**(ph).

A: Yeah.

Q: What is **konnektenvolk**(ph)?

A: **Konnekten**(ph), it – it's a subdued human beings working for the –

Q: Overlords.

A: – overlords, yes.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah.

Q: I see.

A: So this was – this was school located – trade school, actually, this was trade school, because no secondary schools were allowed. But in that trade school we had schooling, secondary schooling undercover, we say. We used to say yeah, **pod pokrywką** gymnasium **pod pokrywką**. The secondary school was under the cover.

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Q: Okay.

A: So even we had the universities and polytechnics, everything was unofficially forbidden, but underground was acting. So, going to my trade school – actually, this was the first class of gymnasium we call it, high school, I was passing the main gate –

Q: Of the ghetto.

A: – and actually right by that bridge, what you saw in that film.

Q: Okay.

A: Walking there. So this was close. This portion was Aryan portion, so we saw it, everything what was going on behind the wall.

Q: So you would see over the wall?

A: Yes.

Q: What were the things that you were seeing?

A: Well, the buildings. The street was divided by the wall, and these houses there, the – cause ghetto was overpopulated. At that time, some of the houses are already empty, because that process of sending Jews to the death chambers in **Treblinka** was – vacated a lot of space, leaving space in the buildings. So that was neglected. On top of the wall, actually, the Germans set up machine guns. There were, actually at that time, some of the people that came from the ukra – **Ukraine** – Ukrainians

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were guarding the Jewish ghetto, and Latvians were guarding the Jewish ghetto.

And the Germans were in the supervisory positions.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So what I saw there? I remember when the Jewish uprising started, this –

Q: Well, we'll talk about that later on.

A: Yeah.

Q: We'll go back now to –

A: So guide me to whatever –

Q: Okay.

A: – because I don't want to jump from one –

Q: That's okay.

A: – subject to another –

Q: That's okay.

A: – because this gonna be a –

Q: You're – yeah, bu-but you're explaining things in a very interesting fashion. And we started with the synagogue, and the beautiful synagogue that – that was there before the war. And I'd like to ask – you know, you were a young boy when you were there.

A: Yes.



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Q: But do you remember anything from the inside of that synagogue, of what it looked like to you?

A: Not the – the – the altar, the decorations, the building, the walls. I have a picture, but not too vivid, you know.

Q: Was it big? Was it a –

A: Hm? Oh yes, very large. Very large building. Very large building there. There was a Torah displayed there, and that seven – seven candles.

Q: The menorah.

A: Yeah, menorah. Then th – then I remember, and I listened to some of the cantors? I used to hear the singers.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So they had the very good singers.

Q: Did you go during service times?

A: Mm – no, no, no. But they had some practices during that time, so that we walked in and we were permitted to look around, and –

Q: Mm-hm. Well, it sounds – it was unusual that your father would think of it, to take you to the churches of different religions, and the worshipping houses of different religions.

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A: You know, war – **Warsaw** was actually like an international sort of a **metropoly**(ph), and we had the majority Poles, okay, that was about 800,000 Poles at that time, and 400,000 were Jews. But we had Germans, we had Lithuanians, and different nationalities living in – in – in **Warsaw**.

Q: And your father, was he a – an international kind of person?

A: No, no, no.

Q: No? So what was his reason for bringing you to these places?

A: Well, he wanted to – let's say to satisfy my curiosity. I was always, let's say, curious of what the other people, how they pray, what they do, and how the ceremony goes, you – so I – I remember when I visited **cerkiew**, which was that Orthodox. The only thing that was – that I remember was the – a lot of herbs, and holy –

Q: The incense.

A: – things – in – yes, th-they were burning, and the smoke of it, you know, then – then I started –

Q: Tearing up.

A: – getting tears in my – tearing up, and then he said okay, that's – that's enough. But he – he wanted me to know, let's say, what the city is like.

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Q: Mm-hm. Let's – let's turn a little bit then to your own home, which is, I started asking about the physical, how it looked physically, and if you could paint a picture for me.

A: Our – our apartment was, let's say, within a complex – that was industrial complex. My father was working for the transportation com – company, and where he was in the – in this storage, purchasing the tires, different parts for the buses that were in the workshop, repaired. Our apartment consisted of one large room. There was a bed, and two bedrooms, and a kitchen.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: You know, for **Warsaw** that was a nice –

Q: Nice size.

A: Nice size of place. And the next, adjacent building was a large building, built during the Tsarist times, I think, that they had three different factories. That was a textile factory, there was some mechanical shop, and the top was some chemical establishment there. So we didn't have many neighbors, you say civilians, because we were part of that industrial complex. My mother was running a little cafeteria, for one place, and the father was working for the **Polska Linia Samochodowa**, which was the transportation company.

Q: Mm-hm. Was it a private company, or state-owned company?

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A: I would say this was a private company, yes, yes.

Q: Okay. Okay. And the – and was it that it was the co – a company apartment?

That is, it belonged to the company, but people who worked there could rent them out?

A: Yes, th-this is – this – when we moved from **Hosia(ph) Street**, because this part here is **Krochmalna** part. This is away from the center of the city. This was in the suburb called **Wola, w-o-l-a, Wola**.

Q: I see. And when did you move there? How old were you?

A: That – I was, let's say I was about five years old or so when we moved there. And we lived there throughout, let's see, siege of **Warsaw** in 1939, and during the occupation, until I was deported.

Q: I see. So it was your home.

A: That was my home, yes.

Q: That was your home. Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: I had a sister.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes, she was older, about four or five years older than I am.

Q: So she was born in the mid-20s, something like that?

A: She was born in 1924, and my vintage was, as I mentioned, '29.

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Q: What was her name?

A: **Helena.**

Q: Is she still alive?

A: No, no, no. She was so exhausted actually, she died in **Germany.**

Q: You mean, during the war?

A: Wa – after – after –

Q: Right after the war?

A: Yeah. Yes.

Q: I see. What was your mother's name?

A: Mother name was **Maria.**

Q: And your father's?

A: **Piotr. Peter.**

Q: **Peter.**

A: Yes.

Q: And your mother's maiden name?

A: **Wlodarski.**

Q: **Maria Wlodarski.**

A: **Wlodarski.**

Q: Okay.

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A: **W-l-o-d-a-r-s-k-i.**

Q: Okay. Were they – were they vars – **Warsawians**?

A: My mother was born in vicinity of **Kielce**.

Q: Okay.

A: And my father was **Warsawian**, yes, but he lived with his folks in – near – near **Kielce**. And we lived in **Hosia(ph) Street**, as I mentioned.

Q: Mm-hm. Did you have aunts and uncles, and larger family?

A: Oh yes, my mother's brother, we owned a little summer home in **Otwock** that was east – east of **Warsaw**, within the network of electrical trains. So we were communicating on weekends to **Stara Wieś**.

Q: **Stara Wieś**.

A: Old village.

Q: And it was – and **Otwock** was a region, or a village, or a town?

A: No, **Otwock** was the largest city that the electrical train was – had the terminal there. So **Stara Wieś** was [indecipherable] and **Stara Wieś**, this was couple kilometers east of **Otwock**. **Otwock** was larger – larger –

Q: City.

A: – city, yes.

Q: Okay. And how far was it from **Warsaw**?

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A: This was around, let's say, 30 kilometers or so.

Q: So it was almost like a suburb.

A: Yes, almost like a suburb. Now, as the **Warsaw** is growing, the **Otwock** is getting closer and closer.

Q: I remember the – I remember **Otwock**, because there was a diary of a ghetto policeman from **Otwock** that was written. A very interesting book –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – and a very heartrending book, because he was writing about his dilemma being a policeman. He did not survive the war.

A: Mm-hm. Now **Otwock** I also knew during the occupation, but maybe that's a subject we should touch later on, that –

Q: Well, let's see, and we'll see.

A: When the Germans caught me at the main railroad station, because we had some business with the Hungarians, or Romanians and Germans, that was going to the eastern front, you know, to – for a – for a cover-up I used to be selling cigarettes or newspapers, something, because we deal – we dealt with the Hungarians and the other soldiers for schnapps. We could buy some good material for our, let's say weapons, even pistols and so on. So when I was arrested by the Germans, I was young – 12 years – or 12 - 13 years old, and they put me in the prison on

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**Poznanska Street**, and I – they kept me there – because Germans actually gave to the blue policeman. We had Polish police. On the Polish side they were in blue uniforms, and the German gendarmerie, that was the German police that actually cooperated with the Polish policemen. And they gave me, as a youngster to the blue policemen, and they put me in jail. So I spend there a few weeks, and what happened is that I – I was young, undernourished, and I had some beginning of tuberculosis. So the Polish underground, when they saw what was happening to me, they sent me to **Olenika**(ph), which was the sanitorium near **Otwock**.

Q: I see.

A: And there I was, let's say, for a few months, to kill that –

Q: Tuberculosis?

A: – beginning to – tuberculosis, I had sha – shadows in my lungs that were the sarg – larger size of a plum or an apple. And this finally was arrested and calcinations were formed, and I didn't have an open tuberculosis. So they saved my life, so to speak. Tu-Tuberculosis was, during the time of occupation of **Poland** was a very common problem, because people are undernourished, and –

Q: Was it a killer?

A: Hm?

Q: Wa – did people die from tuberculosis?



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A: Oh yes, yes, yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Open tuberculosis is very contagious.

Q: Okay. So there are many reasons to try and catch it, not only for the person themselves, but so that it wouldn't become infectious and an epi – an epidemic.

A: Yes, yes. No, the – the – it was very close to epidemic, because we were receiving about 1500 calories, and that was not enough to – to – to die, and not enough to live normal life.

Q: Yeah.

A: So the Poles were starving, but the poor Jewish guys, they were even worse, because they were getting about 500 calories a day. So they were destined for death.

Q: Yeah. Okay, let's return prewar. Was your family very religious?

A: I would say yes; Father especially, and my mother. And nearby – I mentioned the church where I was baptized; this was the **Saint Alexander** church on **Three Crosses Square** in Warsaw. But when we moved, we belonged to **Saint Clement's**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: These were the – oh, I forgot that – maybe it will come back to me, but the parish nearby, we were members of that parish, and during the uprising, and during

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the occupation, we attended the masses regularly on – on Sunday. And that was only couple blocks away. This church actually, I found that was damaged, yes, damaged, but it was rebuilt, and it's still existing in.

Q: So did you go weekly to – was it a – was it a family tradition to go to mass every Sunday?

A: Yes, every Sunday we went to mass, and – at this church, or church –

**Boromeusz** Church. This was close to the main entrance to the ghetto. This was at the point where I mentioned street **Żelazna**. Actually at that point **Włodna** and **Elektoralna**, that was a Y, sort of branches, that the church was in that triangle.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: And this was something that I had to be there on Sundays, and some other big holidays, because that was sort of obligatory from the school.

Q: Ah. So –

A: So the school – the schools' students, pupils, were going to that special mass for the students.

Q: And that would be on a school day, or on Sundays?

A: This was Sundays, and major holidays –

Q: Holidays.

A: – yeah.

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Q: Saint days and things.

A: This was before the war.

Q: Yes, I'm talking before the war.

A: Before the war, yes.

Q: Yeah, before the war. And you said that you had – it was a public school that you went to?

A: Yes, the school was number 100. It was a new building, built during the 20 years of Polish independence, and I remember it very well, because that was a walking distance. And school was very clean, well illuminated. We used to have a very soft – soft slippers that we couldn't bring the shoes normally from the street, with the hard soles that would damage shining floors. Nice windows, big windows; classrooms were spacious. So that was a nice time that I had during the time til 1939 –

Q: Yeah.

A: – attending. And I finished, I think the fourth grade.

Q: In – and – by 1939.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your mother and father's own family histories. Had they, either of them finished university, or gone to university?

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A: No, my – no, they didn't have a higher education. My mother completed high school; and Father, he was sort of a business-minded man, and he did not get university studies behind him. But he was, let's say a junior college, education-wise. And he served, during the time when **Poland** was still partitioned, he served in the **Austria** army, so his German was excellent, and partially I inherited the German language from him. So he was – during the occupation, he was employed by the **Ostbahn**. **Ostbahn**, east railroad – the Germans had westbound, eastbound, **Reich-bahn**. So this was part of the **Reich-bahn**, and he was, as an interpreter, working at the main central station there.

Q: Oh.

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, that's quite an interesting position to have.

A: Yes.

Q: So you were – the main central station for the **ost**, for the east.

A: For the east.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes. This was located on the **Jerusalem** alley, and it's still there, but the building was completely, let's say, destroyed, but that area was used for the new structure that is the center **Warsaw** station. Very nice building, near – near that –

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what do they call it, the gift from **Stalin**, near the palace of the – the **Stalin** palace,  
but this was –

Q: Oh, I think I know the building you mean.

A: – a – a left – did you see that building?

Q: It looks almost like the one at mo – in **Moscow**, with similar structure.

A: Yes. This was a style that the Russians ca – kept, that they preserved building the  
structures according to the drawings that they made for their university in **Moscow**.

So the **Alexanderplatz** in **Berlin** was similar to this. Well, this was despised by the

Poles, th-they used to laugh. I remember the first visit in **Poland** in 1950 – '59,

when driving with the guy that was a taxi driver, he asked me, says, the best view of

**Warsaw**? You know where you get the best view of **Warsaw**? He says, the best

view of **Warsaw** you get from the palace. I said, oh yeah? Why is that so? Well,

cause when you in the palace, you don't see the palace. You know, so –

Q: Even the taxi driver.

A: Even the taxi driver, yes. He says that he – he was going a little further, he says,

even that antenna that they built – they built that was a protective weapon that no

Pole could climb up on the very top and do things, dirty things. They hated the

structure, you know. It's still existing. It's like a monument of the Russian

occupation of – of **Poland**. And this was a gift.

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Q: I see. I see.

A: My wife re – remembers this vividly because she was witnessing the erection of that –

Q: The construction of this building.

A: The construction of this, yes. I saw it finished. Now it's dark. When – when you see when the two systems meet, the – th-the monument of the communism, versus against the – the – the capitalism, so to speak, of the skyscrapers, you know, na – modern buildings. It is – it is a contrast that you cannot simply understand, you know, how the Russians could build such a awful structure in the midst of that modern new **Warsaw** that is growing – growing up.

Q: Well, you know, in – architecture has its own stories. In architecture and geography too. You know, geography you would think is such a neutral subject, but geography encompasses maps and street names, and those changed so often, because of whatever political force happened to be in power in this part of the world. Okay –

A: You can – you can actually take a – **Poland** as an example of a migratory nation, because when you look – when you look at the history, the union with **Lithuania** was what, 15<sup>th</sup> century, when we were one country, **Poland** was actually the largest

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state in – in – in – in **Europe**; from the **Black Sea** all the way to the black – **Baltic Sea**.

Q: That's right.

A: And the borders were changing so much, going eastbound, westbound, and that's why the Poles are of some different characters, because the days of occupation changed the people. And since the borders moved, the people moved.

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

A: That was tr-tragic in a way, but when Polish borders were set up in **Yalta**, **Potsdam** and other places where the destiny of **Poland** was set up with the matches, they were laughing that **Churchill**, **Stalin** and **President Roosevelt**, they were setting up the borders of **Poland** with the m –

Q: With the matchsticks.

A: – matches. And then the famous **Curzon** line, the [indecipherable] of **Curzon**, you know, that divided the portion of eastern part of **Poland**, and the western part of **Poland**.

Q: You mean during the war itself?

A: During the war itself. In 1939 – we jumping from subject to subject.

Q: We are. It's okay.

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A: But that mixture maybe will give you a little better idea what – that time, in '39, there was that infamous pact of **Ribbentrop-Molotov**. Thirty-nine when the **Russia** was befriended with **Reich**.

Q: With **Germany**.

A: With **Germany**. And this was – we call it the fourth partition of **Poland**, and the border line, **Curzon Line** actually came into picture. Because now – it – there is a certain similarity what they doing now in **Ukraine**, you know, when they coming to protect their brothers and sisters, living in the administrative territory of eastern **Ukraine**, that was happening in the eastern part of **Poland**. They came to resc – rescue the Ukrainians minority that lived there, and the **Byelorussian** minority, and all the part of north – northeast part of **Poland** that's **Lithuania** nowadays. They were trying to save their people from the Polish tyranny. So the borders were moving and then we sometimes laughed that we have Poles with so many German names, and we have Germans with the Polish names.

Q: It got all mixed.

A: Yeah.

Q: It got all mixed, and – through all of these chess players –

A: Yes.

Q: – you know, on the – on the field. Let's go back again.



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A: Okay.

Q: Let's go back again. In the – at – I wanted to find out more about your families' histories. That is, what kind of a family did your father come from, and that your mother came from?

A: They were, let's say Father, his brother owned a larger piece of land near **Kielce**. And Mother was living in that area, before they moved into **Warsaw**.

Q: Okay.

A: So they were rather the agricultural, farmer – farmers.

Q: Farm people.

A: Yes. And when they lived in **Warsaw**, they changed their style completely.

Q: Oh, did they?

A: Yes, because you know, as they came from the smaller – smaller places, into big city like this. So this was a major change –

Q: Did they feel –

A: – in their style of life.

Q: Did they feel – were they comfortable in **Warsaw** –

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: – did they feel good –

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A: Sister, for instance – we di – we were not rich, but we were pretty well-to-do, and Sister was going to ballet school. I was going to the normal public school, but later on, during the occupation, they had to dish out money so I could go to the secondary school, unofficial –

Q: Yes.

A: – secondary schools. And the sister was much older than I am, so she was continuing that – let's say musical education that she wanted to finish, but that was very difficult. Difficult because living conditions were very –

Q: Hard.

A: Living conditions were rough, very rough. People were rather concerned how to survive from day to day. They couldn't have any plans at all.

Q: Yeah. You –

A: I remember as a kid I used to say goodbye to my parents going to school, because I didn't know whether I – I am gonna come back, you know, in peace. So city was living in a very, how shall I say, warlike atmosphere. Strit – streets were not safe. Streetcars were – very often street was blocked, and people were taken by force into the – the trucks, and put into the camp to be sent to work in – in – in **Germany**. Slave laborers.

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Q: So, it just – you wouldn't know, when you were on the streetcar, whether or not you'll make your destination.

A: Yes.

Q: Is that what you're saying?

A: Yes. Nervousness. Nervousness was a controlled – a very rude way by the Germans. At the beginning – that was – I'm speaking of 1940, very rough winter in **Warsaw**, because it was very cold, and then '42 – '42, '41 – '42, when the separation of the population was getting to the point that they build the ghetto, and they separated Aryan population from the Jewish population. And then '43, the conditions started changing where that German behavior, after **Korsk**(ph) and **Stalingrad** changed their attitude. They sort of mellowed down, you know, that's – that greeting of **high Hitler**, with the hand raised very high, changed a little bit like, just in case we lose, **high Hitler** with the little – smaller – smaller gesture. We were laughing, and – but we sensed that was a city that was witnessing the change in the German attitude. **Stalingrad** was a major – major change in the German bravura, the German spirit of vic-victory for any cost.

Q: So, I'll ask one question about this, and then I want to go back still, to pre-war. Did people know about German losses in **Stalingrad**? I mean, after all, they controlled the media.

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A: Oh yes, yes, they – let's say, the German propaganda was very strong when the Operation **Barbarossa** starts. You know, they named – the code name **Barbarossa** was the time when the Germans attacked **Russia**. This was a sh – shock.

Q: So you mean June 21<sup>st</sup>?

A: I am saying June 21<sup>st</sup>, I think, 1941. Am I correct?

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah, '41. And th-the Operation **Barbarossa** was observed by us very closely. I was already a part of the –

Q: Don't talk about that, just about – I – what I wanted to know about is, how much did people know about the Battle of **Stalingrad** in '43?

A: **Stalingrad**. Let's say, we drew conclusions what was happening in the eastern front, when we saw trains going through **Warsaw** with the German sol – German soldiers, you know, that no ears, no noses, no hands, because of the frostbites, from that famous Russian general. You know the fis – famous Russian general? What was his name?

Q: General – General **Winter**.

A: General **Winter**, yes.

Q: Yes.

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A: And we were witnessing, plus the Germans themselves were telling these stories, and somehow the rumor was spreading out among – and then we had envoys from the Polish Home Army that were going sometimes eastbound. And they knew what was happening. Plus, we were getting the news from the **BBC**.

Q: That's interesting.

A: See, the radios were confiscated. All radios were confiscated when the Germans entered. But we were smart enough not to give all the radios away.

Q: Did your family have a radio?

A: Oh yes, before the war we had a radio, because Mama, as I said, my mother was running that little cafeteria for the radio producer. Radio **Union**(ph).

Q: Oh, so she wasn't working for the same organization as your father, she was running a cafeteria for another organization?

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: So this, to make the ends meet, you know, both of them were working to send us through schools, and all the exp –

Q: Did she have any help at home for – I mean, hired help, or did she do everything?

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A: Oh yeah, **Stefcha**(ph) – **Stefcha**(ph) – **Steffa**(ph) – **Steffa**(ph) was the girl that was actually sort of taking care of us –

Q: Okay.

A: – my sister and I.

Q: Okay. Okay, so before the war, you had a radio.

A: We had the radio, we had telephone. That was not the modern, you know, **iPhone** like we have here. That was on the wall, with that little receiver that you are putting in, the dial –

Q: You mean, your phone – your phone wasn't a map service, and wasn't a laundry service, and wasn't a camera as well, like the **iPhone** is?

A: No. No, we could call, let's say, the operator for a weather report, or things like that, but that was the long way.

Q: That's right. So – so you had a phone, you had a radio. Did your parents own an automobile?

A: Let's say, that was time when we had a couple cars that we rented for taxi.

Q: Oh.

A: For taxi, you know. So later on, when there was no gas, there were no need for cars.

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Q: So you rent – your family rented cars out and used them as taxis to make money? Is this what there was –

A: No, it's a – when that firm actually was very close to – to bankruptcy, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: Father received this, I should say, a premium, like, that were two cars that he repaired, and then he rented out to the guys that were taxi drivers.

Q: Oh, and so he got some – some – he got some percentage of that.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: I see. So the firm that he was working in, which was – tell me again, it was –

A: First **Galena(ph) Samochodowa**.

Q: And that was to do parts for buses, right?

A: Yes.

Q: To buy parts for –

A: These were – these were the intercity buses. Not like a **Greyhound**, or –

Q: Yeah.

A: Much smaller, but they were going from city to city, alongside the railroads.

Q: And did that – did that company go bankrupt before the war?

A: No, no, this lasted til 1939. Actually, some of the buses, some of the cars were requisitioned by the army when the war started in 1939.

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Q: Okay.

A: I remember a visit of some high ranking officers that came over, and they were discussing what cars can be used by the army.

Q: The Polish army.

A: Polish army, yes.

Q: Okay. Okay, now I want to turn to another subject; again, before the war. What were the kinds of conversations that you would have around the dinner table with your family? Did you talk about political events, and political things?

A: Say Poles all together, they have, let's say, great interest in – in politics. And especially since **Poland** was exposed to all different, let's say pressures from the west, from the east. Discussions at the table, and friends of my father came over. They were officers from the – active officers from the – from the Polish army. They discuss at the table the issues of **Poland** being such a strong country, that they – the Germans will attack **Poland**, we will resist, and then so on, and so on. So the talks were on the subject of military efforts, and – an-and **Europe** at that time was sort of sensing oncoming second World War. So these discussions, I remember that the father was discussing this. But when we had gatherings that my mother's brother coming from **Otwock** for – sometimes for a weekends, or summertime, so we were going there, discussions were different, you know. Our schooling time, and then



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changes in the economy that were improving little by little; because you know, country was actually devastated during the first World War, and the oppressors, the occupiers, they – they were taking their share. So we could not develop, just like western **Europe** developed free, and that momentum that they had could not be, let's say, shown in the Polish economy.

Q: Well, here's a question that's a bit provocative, and I know in advance that it is. But there is the image, that when the war started, and **Germany** crossed the border into **Poland** with tanks, they were met by cavalry officers on horses and swords.

A: This is – actually, this was a false story. Some of the big cavalry units were surrounded by the German, let's say motorized units. And when they locked in, they tried to escape, but they were not, let's say, crazy enough to attack with the lances against the German tanks, no.

Q: Okay. I mean – I-I mean more that **Poland** was so unprepared that it didn't have tanks of its own, that it didn't have modern military equipment. Is that so, or is that a falsehood?

A: That's falsehood. We had air force.

Q: Okay.

A: That's a – not as modern as the Germans had, but very effective.

Q: Okay.

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A: We had our own design, let's say **WSK Kalisz** and that **PZL-11**. These airplanes were not large in numbers, because this was a developing industry in **Poland**, the aircraft industry. The tanks, they were not built in **Poland**, but we had tanks vic – **Vickers** tanks from – imported from **England**. And we had the motorized units. We had the motorized brigade that actually later on, became the first armored division in the west, under General **Maczek**, af you – if you heard.

Q: Uh-huh. Okay.

A: And when – when **Poland** army was formed, let's say we had so much experience with the enemies that the army was indoctrinated well enough to be spiritually strong. Equipment-wise, we were inferiors to Germans. We were inferiors – spirit of fighting was much stronger maybe that the Germans had.

Q: So the morale was high.

A: Morality of the army was high, morale was high, but the equipment was inferior, inferior. But very effective. Because remember, when the – when the Germans attacked us from three directions, actually; from **East Prussia**, going south; from the **Reich**, they were going east, and from the south, they were attacked through – **Czechoslovakia** was already annexed by the – by the **Reich**, by the **Germany**.

Q: Mm-hm. Right.

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A: And at that time also **Slovakia** joined the German camp. So we had some – part of the invasion of ch – Slovaks into **Poland**, the German armies, and then armies from the **East Prussia** that was coming in.

Q: And that was all September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939?

A: Yes, September 1939. So, wi – most of our defenses were directed against the Germans coming from the west. We did not expect the Russians will stab us in the back on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September. They attacked to come and free their people that were living in **Kresy**, which was the **Volhynia**, **Polesie**, **Podole**, and the **Nowogródek**, closer to **Lithuania**, as we were. So **Kresy** were liberated, quotation marks, by the – by the Russians.

Q: So there was no knowledge of the **Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in Poland**?

A: In **Poland**?

Q: Yes.

A: Yes, there was knowledge, yes, we knew, we knew about it, yes.

Q: At the time?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Because it was signed one week before the war started.

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A: Yes, but we knew it. Don't forget that the Polish **dwika**(ph), which was the, let's say, compared to – to **FBI** or **CIA**, the Secret Service, and so on, we had a very good sensors everywhere in – in –

Q: Okay.

A: – in **Prussia** and in – in **Germany**, especially in **Berlin**. And –

Q: So you had intelligence reports, the con – the government had intelligence reports.

A: Oh yes, yes, yes.

Q: Okay. But then –

A: And these were prior to the – prior to the outbreak of the war. We were pretty well advanced in decoding German messages. “**Enigma**” is – that's the movie nowadays –

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: – going on, I don't know if you see it. I didn't see it, but I would like to see it, because there was a great contribution to the victory of the allied effort during the second World War, by giving the – giving the English and French the secrets of enigma. What was started was the getting in, was the mathematical school that the Poles attended in 1932. And the connections that the **Germany** had with **East Prussia** was via the enigma. They were sending codes, and all different secret

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information. So the Poles started getting interest in it, and **Zygalski, Rafski(ph)**, and there was a third name that I forgot, but the – these were the three codebreakers, later on that they work for the Polish secret service. And this was in July 1939, when from **England, Poland** signed the agreement to be defended by **England** and **France**, in case that we get attacked by the Germans. But anyway, going back to that point that the British paid a visit to **Poland, Pery(ph)** was the name of the town in the suburb of **Warsaw**. Poles had copied two machines that were intercepted. When they send this to **East Prussia**, it went via **Warsaw**. So the secret service took the machines, dismembered them, photographed them, do everything possible to reproduce the machines. And some of the copies were so identical that the Germans wouldn't be able to recognize which is the original, which is the copy.

Q: Oh, so then you started fueling disinformation?

A: Yeah, so when they came over, the British, **Knox** and **Denniston**, I think, they were two gentlemen, and the Frenchman, **Bernard**, Colonel **Bernard** came over, and they were actually exchanging their accomplishment that field of cryptology, with the Poles. And they were very surprised when the Poles simply showed them that, we have two gifts from you. One machine for the British, **M – M – MI-6**, I believe, and the French secret – military secret to Colonel **Bernard**.

Q: So they gave these two enigma –

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A: Enigmas to our allies.

Q: I see. Okay, this shows how much you know about – I mean, very few people know the detail of this – these sorts of events. But when I asked of the **Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**, and did people know about it, I – I need to be more precise. Did the man on the street know about it, or did the government know about it?

A: I'd say, speaking of government, Polish government, when **Poland** was attacked, escaped, with a lot of trained personnel; most of the Polish airmen went through **Romania** – **Romania** was ally of **Poland** – and most of them escaped through **Hungary** and **Romania** to the west.

Q: Okay.

A: So when the government left **Poland**, ji – was General **Rydz-Śmigły**, and **Mościcki** was the president. **Mościcki** was actually a – a s – a Swiss. He was educated in **Switzerland** and so on. But anyway, when they left, the official, legal Polish government was formed in **France**. In exile, they – we called it.

Q: Of course.

A: So through that government, and the connections of the Polish underground, and the government in **France**, and later on when **France** was defeated, they moved to **London**. And then came picture of President **Racziewicz**, if you know, and then **Sikorski**, General **Sikorski**. He was a premier of the Polish government in exile.

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Q: Okay.

A: Through that government, and the connections of Polish underground, you know, there was an exchange of news, views, and interviews, whatever was happening in the west, and especially in the **Germany**. You know, so –

Q: So that – so –

A: – so they were well informed. The members of the underground in **Poland** was – were – were very well informed of what was behind the screen going on.

Q: All right. What about people like your family, like your neighbors. Did you know of – of – were – were – was the regular person in **Warsaw** as well informed, or were they surprised? Because you see, when you say something like, the **Soviet Union** stabbed **Poland** in the back, that – that suggests a surprise. And if you're very well informed, you won't be surprised.

A: Let's say, we had so many refugees in **Warsaw** during the war, as the Germans advanced from the west –

Q: Okay.

A: – toward **Warsaw**. Eight – on the eighth day of operations, they were already at the gates of **Warsaw**. So we had refugees coming from the west into **Warsaw**, and we had refugees coming from the east into **Warsaw**. So, this melting pot, this city,

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the capital city was sort of a source of all kind of gossip; good news, bad news. So the people were pretty well informed.

Q: Okay.

A: Even the – in the streets, average Pole not maybe educated well enough, but still –

Q: Knew something.

A: – people say.

Q: People talk.

A: And this was an exchange of news. Plus, you know, we had hidden radios, we were listening to the **BBC**.

Q: Okay. So now I've jumped ahead a little bit. I want to go back to the very beginning. Do you remem – the very beginning of the war. Do you remember where you were on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939?

A: September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939, prior the day to that outbreak and attack by the Germans, I was walking with my sister toward the deli store nearby, and we were talking about – because the – that was in the atmosphere that Poles – we are so strong that if they attacked us, the third day, our forces will be in **Berlin**, you know. So I talked to my sister, I says, would you be – **Helena**, would you be interested to – to – to see the



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war, what it is like? And she says yes, it will be very interesting. So, as kids, you know, young people, we were talking about the oncoming disaster.

Q: And you were 10, and she was 14.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. It's – you were kids.

A: Yes. The kids, but you know, th-th – the kids, let's say, in – in – in adopted country, here in **United States**, they are not as mature as the kids in – in – in – living in the conditions, wartime conditions. Kids mature fast. You know, when you're in danger, y-you don't think about baseball, **TV** sets, and things at the time that was not existing. But we were seriously interested of what was going on. When I joined the underground – maybe that's a subject later on –

Q: Yes.

A: – this was 1940 – '42, I was – I was what, 12 - 13 years old.

Q: You were young.

A: I was young.

Q: You were young. You were young. Okay, so the day before, you remember going to the deli with your sister.

A: Yes.

Q: What about the day itself? When did you learn?

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A: We learn the first, when we saw the German airplanes flying over, and the Polish anti-aircraft artillery opened the full blast, whatever was necessary to protect our skies, I saw the dogfights of the Polish **P-11** fighter planes in the sky. The **Messerschmitts** were much faster, and they were metal planes. But the planes that **Poland** had, had a very [phone ringing][break]

Q: So you – you saw the Polish planes, yes.

A: The Polish planes. The anti-aircraft – actually, there was a heavy machine gun position near that **Clement's** church, in their garden, you know, they set up near the church, because you know, the religious Germans would not maybe mount an attack somewhat close to the church. But this – this post was manned by the – by the Polish army, and the anti-aircraft was very effective.

Q: Were any of them shot down?

A: I saw, let's say, smoke trails, three times. One was, I think, Polish airplane, and then the two **Messerschmitts** went down. The conflict that lasted from first of September til sixth of October, the losses that the Germans suffered in the air force – they say that the Polish air force was grounded and non-existing, on the contrary. I have a book written by **Becker**, a German writer, who said that first 16 days, there was a very effective strength of Polish air force. Pilots were very well trained in **Dęblin** air academy. And these pilots that were fighting in 1939 over the Polish

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skies, they escape through **Romania**, through **France**, to **England**. And they were part of the – part of the battle – Battle of **Britain**.

Q: So, in other words, did they become – did they set up the training for the **RAF** pilots, and for Polish pilots over – over **Germany**?

A: The **RAF**, yes, that was the – **Doening**(ph), General **Doening**(ph), the head of the **RAF**. He was very skeptical, because there was a language barrier, and actually, he finally, when he saw what the damages the **Luftwaffe** did to the British, he decided to accept the Polish contingent of air pilots, and there were two squadrons formed. Three or two, and three or through – three. **Kościuszko** Squadron. I even have a poster that I can later on show you. These pilots – if you saw a movie, “**Battle of Britain**,” there were Poles, very brave, and we had the highest score, beating the Germans on equal basis, you know, because **Spitfires** and **Hurricanes** were equivalent to **Messerschmitts**. Or **Dornier**, or whatever they had, the bombing airplanes, the **Heinkels** and **Dorniers**, and all the weapons that **Goering** provided for – for the Operation **Sea Lion**, whatever it was, he wanted to put **Britain** on the – on her knees. And the fight was very, let’s say, effective. So the pilots, the pilots that left **Poland**, they put their talent to action in **England**, when they had better airplanes, but the spirit very strong. The – the British were a little skeptical, because of the language, and we were not so very obedient. We had our

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style of fighting in the sky, and the guys really, when they attacked, th-th-the British squadron leader at that time, there was a Canadian by the name of **Kent**. He was trying to control the disobedience of Pole, how to attack the Germans, but the results were rather – very effective. Realize that the Poles in **England**, with 15 squadrons, four bomber squadrons. We accounted for almost 1000 German planes shot in the air, th-the dogfights. One thousand, that's a big –

Q: That's a lot.

A: – big score.

Q: That's a lot.

A: The 303 was the **Kościuszko** Squadron. And why we named the **Kościuszko** Squadron was the story of **Kościuszko** heard that we got as a rep – **re-reprocity**. See, the **Poland** regained her independence, thanks to President **Wilson**. And at that time Americans wanted to pay the – pay the dues for – for fighting, for independence of **Poland** from the **Bolsheviks**; this is the first World War. And 18 American pilots, Americans, they formed the squadrons that fought the **Bolsheviks**.

Q: Oh, really?

A: And they were the **Kościuszko** Squadron.

Q: Oh, I see.

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A: And **Kościuszko** name for the bri – Battle of Britain was with the insignia of the same thing of **Kościuszko**, with the American flag, with the two [indecipherable] like this, I show you later on –

Q: Okay.

A: – in that poster. But that was paid respect for the Poles for our, let's say, contribution to the independence of the **United States**.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: That was now the General **Pulaski** that was, that died in **Savanna, Georgia**. The father of American cavalry. And **Kościuszko**, the father of **West Point**. I don't know if you ever visited **West Point**?

Q: I – I haven't, but – and I didn't know that he would have been the founder of it.

A: Yes, he started this whole thing, as a stronghold against the Brits.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And there's a big bol – **Kościuszko** monument in the square of the – and there are many – many artifacts, and remembrances. **Jefferson** was that –

Q: Yes, of course.

A: He called **Kościuszko** as a – the son – the true son of freedom.

Q: I do know who **Kościuszko** was, of course, but –

A: Yeah.

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Q: – that – but I didn't know this about **West Point**.

A: Yeah, **West Point**.

Q: Okay.

A: That was acad – a military academy, yeah.

Q: Right, sure. Okay, that's a far away from **Warsaw**, and September first –

A: Yes, okay, yes, I'm sorry for that [indecipherable] –

Q: It's okay.

A: – because you are actually the guidance.

Q: I know.

A: You the – you're the **GPS**.

Q: I know, but you have such interesting – interesting observations that I want to hear them, and then we get off track. All right, so we're back down – we're back at **Warsaw**. You see at least three trails of smoke; two from **Messerschmitts** in the very beginning.

A: Yeah.

Q: And then how did the following days unvel – unfold and develop, in those first few days of –

A: Few – few days of –

Q: – in **Warsaw**, and what do you see?

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A: – let's say – in eight – eight or ninth of September, the German forces were surrounding the city. **Warsaw** was defending herself til the 28<sup>th</sup> of September. No water, no ammunition, so that forced us to – to surrender.

Q: Okay, here's my question, though: what was happening with your family?

A: My family, okay.

Q: I want to know what happened with you.

A: This – we – on the 11<sup>th</sup>, I think, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, I saw the Germans' planes coming over and making some white streaks in the sky, and let's say a few hours later, a heavy artillery bombardment started.

Q: So you hadn't heard any bombs before? No bombs were falling on **Warsaw** –

A: No, there were bombs – bombs bombing was, but not the part that we lived in.

Q: I see.

A: That was the direct hit that they started attacking the complex, because the repair shops of these transportation company, they looked like hangars, you know –

Q: Aha, okay.

A: – buildings, and the other buildings were sort of industrial. So when they marked, the artillery barrage started.

Q: Okay.

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A: And it was so powerful that the whole thing – we only were saving was our lives, that's all, because there was such a quick, rapid involvement in flames, under the attack, that I remember we were trying to save one person that was locked behind the doors, and we were trying to break the lock to get to, because when we found it th-th-that a man had both legs cut off. So we tried to save him, but it was in vain. We saved one –

Q: I – I don't – I don't understand, what is it that you – I understand you're saying that man had both – how did – who was he, and where was he?

A: No, he was a repairman or a watchman in that company that was in the – in the – in the repair shops, you know.

Q: Okay. And the – and the bomb fell, and the or –

A: The – the – the artillery shells were falling left and right. The char – the buildings were inflamed. And – and – and – and we were trying to save lives. People – wounded – wounded people, so I was running around, trying to find the rubber hoses from the gas ovens, to use as –

Q: Tourniquets.

A: – tourniquets to stop the bleeding. We were carrying some of the wounded people to the hospital next few blocks, on **Plocka** Street, in **Wola**. But whenever we delivered them to the hospital, most of them were – bled to death. So, we couldn't



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save them. But when the houses, our houses, our apartment were all destroyed. You know who came to our rescue?

Q: Who?

A: We had orphanage across the street, orphanage of **Korczak's. Korczak.**

Q: Oh, **Janusz Korczak**?

A: **Janusz Korczak.** His real name was **Goldsmith**, I believe.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: **Janusz Korczak** gave us a protection in his house, that was somehow saved.

And I was in the basement. He was feeding me the oatmeals for a couple weeks.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: **Korczak.** I knew him personally, yeah.

Q: How did you know him? As a –

A: How did I know him?

Q: Yeah.

A: In – he provided shelter for us. I remember he was in Polish uniform with the – with the rank of lieutenant, I think. The – he was in the Polish armed forces, in the uniform, because as a reserve officer.

Q: Had you known him before this?

A: No, no –

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Q: No.

A: – no, no. We met during that disaster.

Q: So your own apartment was bombed out?

A: Yes. His house still stays there. There's a monument of **Janusz Korczak** in the yard, in the courtyard.

Q: Okay.

A: [indecipherable] I have some pictures of the –

Q: Well, tell us, you know, for those who will not know, who was **Janusz Korczak**?

A: Oh, **Janusz Korczak** was the educator and teacher, well-known in western **Europe**, how to develop a child's, let's say, spiritual background. And he was teaching the Polish schools about how to bring up the children the right way. He was a doctor by – by profession. He was very well-known among the Poles, and also abroad, as a writer, and teacher.

Q: What happened to him?

A: What happened to him. When – when the Germans build the ghetto, he was taken with the children – there was about 200 children –

Q: Were they Jewish?

A: Yes, m – Jewish, yes.

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Q: So this was a Jewish orphanage?

A: All Jewish orphanage, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: He was moved to **Chłodna Street**, that was a building where they accommodated them, and this was in the portion that I mentioned before, when the small ghetto was adjacent to the large ghetto through three, four blocks, between **Żelazna** and **Wronia**, along the **Chłodna Street**, **Chłodna Street**. So I remember, as child going to that trade school, we had the backpacks. We used to use our blouses and backpacks for food. When we boarded the streetcar that was going through that three blocks of both ghettos, we used to empty our –

Q: Backpacks.

A: – backpacks, and – and whatever food we could share, we were throwing it on the street so the kids from the building actually were picking it up.

Q: So, in other words, they were allowed to go on the street. The streetcar – you couldn't leave the streetcar, but you could throw things out the window.

A: Yes, yes, the – the police blew – policemen that were protecting people from getting off the streetcar, or getting on the streetcar, because streetcar didn't stop in that segment, you know, it was going from the **Towarowa** Street, which was the – let's say two blocks to **Wronia**, and then about four blocks to **Żelazna**. And this

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portion was off limits to the Aryans, and vice-a-versa. The Jews couldn't board the – the streetcars to get out from ghetto.

Q: And did this streetcar operate throughout the – the whole time the ghetto was in existence?

A: Yes, the streetcars were going to through the main – main thoroughfares, through **Warsaw**, and through ghetto, with the – the streetcar, our streetcars, the Aryan side, used to have the numbers. The Jewish portion, they used to have the Star of **David** –

Q: I see, so they would –

A: – on that round –

Q: Okay.

A: – signal sign.

Q: So there were actually Jewish streetcars?

A: Let's say manned by the Polish operators, but going through the ghetto.

Q: And only the ghetto.

A: Only to ghetto, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: And after, let's say, that **Chlodna Street**, when things got bad, the **Korczak** orphans were moved to **Sienna Street**, **Sienna Street**, which is close to the Palace

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of Science that **Stalin** gived. Even now when I visited **Warsaw**, there is a **Korczak** monument near the fountain, you know, as he's embracing children.

Q: I see, but then – but the **Stalin** building wasn't there yet, this is all before this.

The – the building that – that you say was the gift of **Stalin**, wasn't there at the time.

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no.

Q: This was before this.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: This was before that, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: So, from there, from **Sienna** Street, where the monument of **Korczak** is located in **Warsaw**, the kids were taken, and he walked with the orphans to the **Treblinka** for gas – for being gassed.

Q: So that was –

A: **Korczak** died with these – with these orphans.

Q: I see.

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A: There is a **Korczak** Park here in **Chicago**, as a – as a memory of –

Q: Of him.

A: – of him.

Q: I didn't know that.

A: Yeah.

Q: I didn't know that.

A: **Korczak**.

Q: **Korczak**. And he took you –

A: There's a book – there is a book written about that – I forgot the title of it, but it's access to very many – many, many, let's say publications on that subject of **Korczak** in that library, the Jewish library on **Tlomackie Street**, near – in the vicinity of that previous synagogue –

Q: I see. I see.

A: – in **Warsaw**. If you're ever interested in this, go to **Tlomackie** Museum, maybe they relocated some of it to that new museum that's on **Nalewki(ph) Street**, near the **Umschlagplatz**.

Q: Okay. So, how many people did **Korczak** take in after this bombing?

A: I would say there were about 200 kids, yes.

Q: I mean, that's how many there were before the bo –

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A: Before that, yeah, yeah.

Q: And then, since – since the artillery fire, and your bi – your home was destroyed, how many did he take in? New people?

A: Oh, the refugees? I would say ma – my family was there, and maybe some three or four other groups – families that were in that basement.

Q: So you could have been about 40 people, or so?

A: I would say, yeah – about that, yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. And you said you got to speak with him?

A: Oh, he was – he was – he was delivering the o – oatmeals, you know, I was exhausted from that fire and then that shock from the artillery bombings, so I was sort of shaken up to the point that he had to calm me down with – whenever he was bringing the hot oatmeal to me, he was almost feeding me, so I could eat, you know. So, he was very soft.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Did he say anything to you?

A: Oh, he said, you look very, very tired to me, you look very tired, so I have to help you to rebuild your strength.

Q: That sounds great, very kind.

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A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because you know, during the siege of **Warsaw** that lasted 28 days, our food supplies were exhausted. The water was short, a shortage of water, and the resistance was strong, very strong. We defended **Warsaw** for so long, and the Germans admired the – the knighthood of the Polish army that I'm after. Because de-defending **Warsaw** was a guy by the name of **Rommel**, General **Rommel**, the Polish side. I don't know if there was any connection of that **Erwin Rommel** in **Africa**, or **Rommel** General.

Q: How interesting.

A: Yeah, **Rommel** –

Q: And how ironic.

A: Yeah. **Juliusz Rómmel**. And there was another general, **Czuma**, **Czuma**, I think his son was here in **Chicago** for a while, but he returned to **Poland**. **Czuma**. **Czuma**, c-z-u-m-a, **Czuma**.

Q: So, where did you go after you were at this orphanage? You didn't stay there forever?



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A: On the orphanage, what we did is, portion of the building that was not completely damaged, so to speak of, so we covered the windows that were all broken, the floor, the doors. We tried to rebuild whatever space was available.

Q: Did you return to your old apartment?

A: Ah, no, no, no.

Q: No.

A: Thi-This whole thing was collapsed. The next – next possession, next building which I mentioned to you, this was a portion of that was offices, portion were this mechanical shop, or textile shop and some chemical stuff that they were doing upstairs. Portion of the offices we converted to our, let's say, primitive living quarters. No water. The windows we covered with whatever. We didn't have plastic, but there was something very foggy that we covered too, because the winter of 1940 was so severe that – frost was so strong that the pigeons were falling off the balconies.

Q: Wow.

A: Very severe winter, minus 40 centigrade, almost.

Q: That's huge.

A: Yes.

Q: That's huge, for a place that's not that far north.

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A: And there we was – we were – let's say, the Germans, when they entered the city, some of the squares they set up the salamanders, you know, they were salamanders, they were like a coke ovens, and they heated up so the people could – could warm themselves. And **Wehrmacht** at that time, they set up field kitchens – can you imagine, for the civilians. The **Wehrmacht** was behaving like a regular – regular army. No – no behavior like the **SS**, or – or – or the, let's say gent – the – the field police. Later on when the secondary units came, the **Wehrmacht** left, you know, so there was a change in attitude toward the civilians.

Q: So, you move back across the street, and – and into one of the offices that now you converted –

A: I returned back to the next possession actually, that was adjacent to the area where we lived. After the fire, we rebuild it. I remember we had two rooms at the beginning, the whole family. And there was a family by the name of **Bront(ph)**, **Bront(ph)**. I think that was a – a German citizen, and his wife was Polish, **Behrowska(ph)**, and they had a daughter, **Danuta(ph)**. And I think this family, because of the German roots, they signed the folks – **Volksliste**. They sign up to be part of, let's say that superior race. So they lived in the two – they displaced us from the two rooms, and they – we were moved to the single room. Four people, single

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room. So, they later on moved out from the area, into a special section of the city that was reserved for the Germans.

Q: I see, I see. Did they have children, or was this only a couple?

A: They're a couple, they had one child, there was – that was **Danuta**(ph). And when she came to visit us during the occupation, she was that hio – the ha – **Hitlerjugend**, but she was the **mädel**, the – the – the –

Q: Ah, **Wundersdeutschen mädel**.

A: – **mädel. Wundersdeutsches mädel**. Yeah, she came in uniform, and we couldn't talk too much to her, even though they were – she was very befriended with my sister, going to the ballet school together.

Q: But things changed.

A: It's changed, yes. Now, I remember when I walked in when they were occupying that two room apartment, I remember the **Griffarts**(ph) on the wall. You know the name **Griffarts**(ph)?

Q: No, what's that?

A: Oh, the German staff officers used to call **Hitler Griffarts**(ph).

Q: **Griffarts**(ph)?

A: **Griffarts**(ph). This was abbreviation of – of **grüsste – grüsste feldherr aller zeit**. The – the – the greatest field Marshall of all times.

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Q: **Griffarts**(ph).

A: **Griffarts**(ph), yeah.

Q: And was it a term of respect and endearment?

A: Well, you know, the **Wehrmacht** were – tha-that was endearment – I – I rather not, because later on **Hitler** acted like a strategist, because he had dreams, you know. So – so –

Q: You mean, like dreams at night?

A: At night, yeah –

Q: Yes.

A: – that he was trying to implement these dreams into the action, you know.

**Manstein – Manstein**, his number one strategist on the eastern front, he had to listen to the fuehrer, you know. So the officers among themselves, from time to time they used the name –

Q: So they had a picture – okay, so, in their apartment, you – the – the **Brandt**(ph) family had **Griffarts**(ph) on the wall.

A: He had the fuehrer on the wall, so that – to us it was a shock.

Q: **Groste Feldmarschall** –

A: **Feldherr aller zeit**.

Q: **Aller zeit. Groste Feldherr aller zeit**.

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A: – zeit, yeah. **Griffarts**(ph).

Q: **Griffarts**(ph).

A: Yeah.

Q: Never heard of it before. Very interesting. Can we cut now for a second?

**End of File One**

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**Beginning File Two**

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Thaddeus Gubala**, on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015. And I would like to pick up where we left off before the break. And from what I remember, we were talking about the **Volksdeutsche** family neighbors that had been in – near you, who displaced you from your own small quarters after the arsenal – the artillery bombs and shells of your own apartment, and had a picture of **Hitler** on their walls in their own place. And he was called the –

A: **Griffarts**(ph).

Q: **Griffarts**(ph). **Griffarts**(ph).

A: **Groste Feldherr aller zeit**.

Q: **Groste – groste Feldherr aller zeit**, and their daughter belonged to the association of young German girls, and – and she no longer – she had been a friend with your sister, but then they no longer could really be close after that.

A: Superiority of race. This – the – they disconnected our good relations.

Q: So how did your lives then – I mean, they wer – ye – it was – your life was turned over because you lost your place to live, and **Warsaw** was now occupied by – by the German **Wehrmacht**, and soon – how did things develop?

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A: Let's say the control of the city – I think that was a **Fisher**, the – the governor of the city, because **Frank** was – **Frank** was in **Kraków**. **Kraków** was the head – ci – the main city of **GG**, government gubern –

Q: **Gouvernement**?

A: **Gouvernement**, yeah. **General na gubernia**(ph)

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And **Warsaw** was a city of transit for the Germans to the eastern front, one of the cities. So the character of the city was changed. A lot of military uniforms we've seen in the streets everywhere, that they were occupying the best place to, let's say, live and be treated. So most of the theaters, restaurants, were with the inscription, **nur für Deutsche**, for Germans only.

Q: I see. So Poles couldn't go there.

A: So streetcars, even streetcars, you know, they had the platform, front platform on the streetcar there was **nur für Deutsche**, only for Germans. Sometimes when there were too many, let's say, attacks on the Germans, or too many of their side weapons disappeared, because in the crowd, the streetcar, many times, you know, the **AK** were cutting their holsters, and stealing their weapons, and so on, and so on. So they were changing the platform, sometimes in front, sometimes in the back. But this was strictly for Germans. And a city, as such, you know, was divided for the Aryans

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and the Jews. The ghetto was formed, the wall was built, and the minority of the Jews, which was the largest diaspora in the world; I think maybe more than in **New York**; so they were put into either small ghetto, or large ghettos. A small ghetto actually, delicately speaking, was reserved for the well-to-do –

Q: Oh really?

A: – Jews. Yes. And the large ghetto was – well, the Germans used the term **lumpenproletariat**.

Q: Okay.

A: Did you hear that one?

Q: Yes.

A: **Lumpenproletariat**. So the poor Jews were in the large ghetto.

Q: So –

A: And, well, the annihilation of the Jewish race started right from the beginning, when they activated **Treblinka**, which was the closest crematorium, closest to **Warsaw**.

Q: So, there was a gas chamber as well as a crematorium?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. I'd like to focus a little bit more precisely on what changes did you see, and what changes happened within your family? So let's – let's focus on that.



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A: It's – okay, my sister was working for a food – food – food factory, and my father, as I mentioned, because of his knowledge of German language, he was used as a interpreter.

Q: When you say your sister was working for a food factory, was this now something under German control?

A: Yes, yes. Most of the Polish industry, which was in the city, and the workshops and the – all kind of places where they could use for the war machinery for the Third **Reich** –

Q: Right.

A: – they immediately activated that, an-and they were trying to give some kind of a priority to produce the machinery of war. Like for instance, that building nearby, what we lived in, the section that there were offices converted to apartments. Now, this portion of the building, the – what was saved after the bombardment, they repaired whatever they could, but the basement and the first floor, what they were doing, they were building field kitchens, you know, just like the first World War, that was on wheels. All these containers and they were cooking the meals for the army. So –

Q: Oh, I see.

A: Yeah, so this was a place, pretty active.

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Q: So, it meant the equipment that – that cooked the food was being manufactured there.

A: Manufactured there, yes, by the Poles. And the production was for the **Wehrmacht**. I remember a visit one day that – I don't know whether he was a **Reichsdeutsche** or **Volksdeutsche**. I think he must have been **Reichsdeutsche** because he had that Tyrolean hat with the little –

Q: Feather?

A: – brush.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Feathers. And he came over, visited. He came in a **Škoda, Škoda**, that was Czech car, very nice car. And he inspected the facilities, you know.

Q: Was this a – a – a person in a uniform, or in civilian –

A: No, he was a – a – a private – private – a civilian uniform, yeah, civilian uniform.

Q: Uh-huh. So was the – so was the – was this production facility owned by – beca – was it still private? In private hands, but German hands?

A: I would say yes. I didn't see any in uniform, any people in uniform. There was the guy that came over a couple times, you know, to inspect the facility, and see what there is – the production rate, or whatever.

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Q: Mm-hm. Did you know that – if he was a chief or something?

A: I would say so, because he had that round sign – badge of **Reichsdeutsche** –

Q: Okay.

A: – you know, they used to have these badges on their lap –

Q: Lapel.

A: Yeah, **patel** – yeah, that's – it was – it – it looked like a **Ebermensch**(ph).

Q: An **übermensch**, yeah.

A: Yes.

Q: Now, when you said that those apartments had been conver – those offices were converted into apartments, and at first you had the two room one, and then you were – your family was pushed out into a one room, what kind of kitchen facilities were there?

A: You know, we – we sometimes improvised things as we need. So I remember my father built his own little oven, connected to the stack, to the chimney, and we were cooking right on two – two – let's say two burners, not burners, but fire **[indecipherable]** what we had that was something, a hotplate like. So this was the part, and the sanitary facilities, they were using some toilets that were left, you know, with –

Q: From the office.

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A: Yeah –

Q: Okay.

A: – of the office, so the primitive and very s-simple way, and the – the idea was to survive, so we did not complain too much.

Q: What about taking a bath?

A: Heating – hm?

Q: What about taking a bath, and heating? How did you handle those things?

A: This – heating, we were boiling the water, you know –

Q: Sure.

A: – in that little stove that we had. The washing facilities, there used to be a public – the public shower stations in the city, so we utilized these.

Q: I see.

A: But then we were heating the water in some tub, you know, and then washing ourselves the best we could.

Q: Okay.

A: There was a lack of everything, you know. Soap was scarcity, paper was a scarcity. Bread tha-that was made for the Poles. Sometimes we were laughing that that bread was just like a – like a – like a board, not properly baked in the – in – in – in enough time to make it edible, to make it edible. They didn't use the flour, they

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used the sawdust underneath in the ovens, you know, so – so this was a substitute.

Everything was ersatz.

Q: Substitute, yes.

A: Substitute. Ersatz. That's a – the bread, the basic stuff, staple. The marmalade was made out of beets, sweetened up with saccharin. You know, it was the artificial sweetener. And that thing, you could eat as much as you wanted, but the next day the thing was fermented and was growing. You always had a full – full jar. So meat was only on the black market – black market, you know, so the ingenious Poles were going to the countryside to bring food. The Germans intercepted – most of the railroad stations they were intercepting in order to take that food away from them. But food; meat, butter, you know, these were things very difficult to obtain.

Q: And they were forbidden?

A: Yes, yes, yes. **Schwarzmarkt** is what they call it, the black market, was a no-no.

Q: Well, here's –

A: The Germans were setting up patrols and – and – and stopping the trains before this destination, and – and – and getting the people, sorting them out, and checking what kind of food they bringing.

Q: Okay. I want to just make sure that I understand it properly. There was rationing, yes?

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A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: There was rationing. We –

Q: And there was rationing so that you could get only a certain amount of any kind of food, but was it actually so that certain foods were forbidden to even have, whether the e – for example, if it's eggs, or butter, or meat. I-Is it that it's not forbidden if you have it in your home, that it's forbidden to bring it there? Ho-How did that work?

A: Let's see, it was forbidden to – meat, especially meat, you know. But eggs you could buy on the bla – black market; flour and butter, you know. Whatever the people could smuggle in from the countryside, that was done. But not all these, let's say attempts, were successful. The Germans were intercepting and taking away from the people.

Q: Okay. So –

A: So even they joked that sometimes as – a pig was smuggled into the city. But how it was smuggled? Because it was dressed up in a human suit, you know, where the snout was all covered up with bandages, you know, and the – th-they – the German patrol was told that this was a sick man going to **Warsaw** hospital; suddenly there was a pig. Women were –

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Q: Was that actually true?

A: Yes, yes. There were many, many different ways of how to outwit the Germans, for the sake of survival. Things were very risky, but still they had to be played.

Q: So you are at – in 1939, you're a 10 year old boy.

A: Yes.

Q: You go through the winter of 1940, and did – did your sister and yourself ever refer to that conversation that you had about gee, it would be interesting to see what war was like, after you actually felt it?

A: Yes, many a times said now, we are experiencing this unfortunate exchange of thoughts that we had just before the war started. Because the occupation was cruel, very cruel. And we were treated as sub-humans.

Q: Did you – how did you personally experience that kind of treatment?

A: How did I experience that kind of treatment? First, as I said, the streetcars were separated for Germans, and for the Poles.

Q: Right.

A: The s – on the sidewalks very often, we had to leave room as the Germans were passing by for them. And the lines for food in our, let's say, stores, were long, people were waiting, sometimes for nothing. The German stores, there was a company my – **Mynell(ph)** – **Mynell(ph)**, that was for Germans, where they could

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buy anything they wanted; butter, eggs, meat. Everything just for the Germans, separated from the Polish.

Q: Were there German civilians?

A: Yes. During the heavy bombing of **Reich**, the – **Germany** was – was bombed. Many Germans, to save their lives, they were moving. Let's say members of the families, they were moving into **Warsaw** to live, and certain parts of the city were reserved for a German population. The better sides, undestroyed, and – was provided for the German families, **Reichsdeutsche** that came from the – from the **Reich**.

Q: So, does that mean towards – closer – closer towards the second part of the war? If you're saying it's when **Germany** itself was being bombed, or –

A: Well, the mass – mass bombing, you know, it started where the Americans declared war, when was this, 19 –

Q: Forty-four, so that's late.

A: Forty-three, I believed it.

Q: No, the Americans started in – June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944 was the invasion of **Normandy**.

A: **Normandy**? Oh, but I am speaking of bombing of **Germany** was already – I think the –

Q: Underway?



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A: – American air force was already in **England** prior to that day.

Q: Oh, that could very well be.

A: Yes.

Q: That could very well be.

A: And – and the – **Harris**, what they call General **Harris**, the bomber – there's a monument in **London** of **Harris**.

Q: Well, but my point is – my – my question is, did these civilians, were they were from the very beginning –

A: No, no.

Q: – in **Warsaw**? They appeared later?

A: No, they appeared later.

Q: Okay.

A: Later, yes.

Q: So, in the beginning the Germans that you saw were military people, were all somehow or other connected with the war effort?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay. Did you see any – you mentioned during the shelling of the artillery, when the factory that – in your home was – was destroyed, that people died, were killed as a result of this artillery fire.

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A: Mm-hm.

Q: Did you ever see anybody el – did you ever see anybody treated violently on the street? Did you ever see any corpses on the roads?

A: No, not violently in the street, there was no scene like this. But there were times where the Germans, let's say, separated certain parts of the street, or streetcars that were in, in order to kidnap the people for work in the **Reich**. So these things were very frequent.

Q: And you saw these things.

A: Yes, I was part of it. That's a scene that I remember. One of my colleagues, he had a pistol on him, and when the Germans stopped, you know, he was so upset that he started sweating, you know. And there was an older lady, say 80 - 85, she look at that young fellow, and she open her purse, you know. So he put the gun –

Q: In her purse.

A: – into her purse, she close it. The Germans didn't attack her, you know, didn't question her at all. And the boys –

Q: But they searched him.

A: – he save his – she saved his life. And – and the spirit, and – and the brotherhood among the Poles in **Warsaw** was unusually unique and – and good, from the sense

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that we stood for each other until the end. And we knew that the end is coming for all of us, one way or the other, so we stuck together. There was a –

Q: And that's – that's unusual.

A: Yeah. For [indecipherable] yes, yes. There were – there were cases, you know, like **schmeil**(ph) **shovnik**(ph), you heard that expression?

Q: Tell me what this is.

A: **Schmeil**(ph) **shovnik**(ph) were the people that, for instance, when the Jews were vacating some areas in **Warsaw**, these guys were sort of acting against them.

Q: How?

A: Anti-Semitism, by e-even – even in the cemetery, you know, when they saw the buried bodies, you know, so they were hunting for people buried, for gold teeth, and things like that.

Q: So they were – they were actually going through corpses to be able to rob them of whatever –

A: Yes. These were cases, yes. And th-the underground government, when they saw certain peoples, the squealers, or some informers, they used to issue the death sentences, and **AK** was executing these people.

Q: Now, you – you – did you know all this as that 10 or 12 year old boy, walking the streets? I want to get back to this child.

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A: I was a member – okay, I was a member, I joined the underground when I was 12. In 1942, I was sworn in in **Schweidel**, the suburb, you know, very nice forest there. I was sworn in into paramilitary organization, which was – pre-war, it was the Boy Scout movement.

Q: So tell me how did that happen? Did you find them, or did they find you?

A: No, they found me, I think. I had two good teachers, you know. **Casimira(ph)** **Bye(ph)** and **Janina(ph)** **Guretsky(ph)**. They were observing me at school, and my behavior, and the way they trusted me. And there was a third teacher, that was Mrs. **Bernisz(ph)**. She was of German descent. And they accosted me, and they ask me if I would be interested to work in the underground. So, I sign up, I was sworn in in 1942, and the rest of the years of occupation, I was a member of the Home Army, Polish Home Army, with the sign of, as you can see, that anchor, **PW**, which stands of **Polska Walcząca**, I don't know, the fighting **Poland**.

Q: The fighting **Poland**?

A: Yes. This was a sign repeated many places, on monuments –

Q: Can – excuse me. Can we focus in on that please? On the – what's on his – on his tie?

A: Oh, this one is here.

Q: Yeah. So it's – it has an anchor, and it has –

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A: And **W**.

Q: And – and a di –

A: **P** for **Poland**, and **W** for **Walcząca**, which means fighting.

Q: Okay, **Walcząca**.

A: Yeah. **Krahelska** was the designer, one of the soldiers that died the first day of uprising was **Krystyna Krahelska**. She designed that –

Q: That sign. The insignia.

A: That sign, and that remained with us, yeah.

Q: Did your parents know any of what you were going to be doing, or – or –

A: Especially when I was coming – you know, there was a police hour in **Warsaw**, eight o'clock.

Q: Curfew.

A: Curfew, yes, that people stopped in the street without proper documents, they were arrested, and if they didn't respond to, let's say a **[indecipherable]** they were shot. After many a times, I was coming home, and there was a discussion, you know, and finally they gave up, you know, because I couldn't do – they couldn't punish me anymore. So I was disappearing for late hours to do my duties, which were –

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Q: So – I'm going to interrupt right here. You're saying that you would come home after eight o'clock, and your parents would be upset?

A: Yes.

Q: And they would say –

A: Where were you?

Q: – where were you? And did they – did you tell them?

A: They sensed something, yes, they did sense something, that I was doing all kind of things that would be penalized by death.

Q: And did they ever address those risks?

A: The way – the way we lived, and the feeling we had toward the occupiers, they did not forbade my activity, no.

Q: Your mother – you said your father was working as an interpreter at the **Ostbahn**.

A: Yes.

Q: Now, what was your mother doing, was she ki – still in that cafeteria?

A: Sh – no, no, there was no more of – that was burned out place, and she was just a housewife, you know, fighting to prepare a meal for us.

Q: Not easy.

A: Here and there, every day.

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Q: Yeah, not easy.

A: Whatever was available.

Q: What did you usually eat?

A: Oh, let's say, for school, sandwich. We had that – that bread, which we called sort of a – like a pumpernickel bread. Two slices that were soaked in artificial coffee made out of grain, regular grain. Put some sugar on top of it, put these things together, and that was my sandwich for school.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: Or, sometimes the onion that was fried in some schmaltz, lard, and this was sort of a spread –

Q: Onto the –

A: – for the sandwich. Meat was a scarcity, scarcity. And let's say sometimes the **Ostbahn**, they had the cafeterias where my mother could get the soup for us.

Q: So your father would bring it back, or –

A: No, my mother used to walk to there and she had the document that she was wife of the employee of the **Ostbahn**, and she was bringing the soup home.

Q: Okay.

A: But I'm speaking of soup.

Q: I know. I know.

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A: But the pota – piece of potato was a surprise. And piece of meat, you know, unseen. So this was a starvation diet.

Q: And you said your sister worked in a food production factory –

A: Yes, be –

Q: – or place, or something. So what was that all about?

A: The food was actually for us, for the Poles. That was not for the production, for the Germans, was strictly controlled by – by the Germans, you know, so they – they were very careful. Let's say they were confiscating the cattle and the – and all the things, but the processing of that was made by – by them.

Q: Okay. So, your sister worked. What kind of food was she producing?

A: I think this was like marmalades, and all kind of preserves, fruit preserves. No – other, let's say preserves. They were – made, you know, pickling the cucumbers, or – or pickles. And that was the simpl – simple – simple food like this, you know.

Q: And did she ever bring any of that home?

A: Oh, she – they put that was that, let's say, instead of payment, you know, they used to give something for the employees. Like my father used to get the alcohol, or coal – coal for burning in the stove. Or sometimes he was getting a – a bread, or mar-margarine. Artificial butter. So these things that he could get from the – from his superiors, you know.



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Q: So, instead of – instead of money, sometimes his – he was paid in –

A: That was like a premium. Sort of a supplement to – to – to – to –

Q: To the salary.

A: – to mediocre salaries. Because this money what the Germans issued had no purchasing power.

Q: Ah.

A: Like for instance, if you went for the black market to buy food in the country. The farmers used to accept only the pre-war money, which was silver coins. Silver coins, you know, the tens **złotys**, five **złotys**, two **złotys**. They were silver. I-I think at about 60 or 70 percent pure silver. So they knew the metal value, and they were selling food for this kind of bouillon.

Q: I see. Rather – and rather than the –

A: Than accepting the paper money issued by the Germans, which had no – it was good for the **General na gubernia**(ph) to – to – to buy some stuff on the black market, but the farmers, they were very skeptical about the paper money.

Q: Okay. **Krystyna**(ph) herself, was she involved in any underground activities?

A: Who?

Q: Your sister.

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A: My sister? I – she knew something about it. Very often, you know, th – sh-she didn't show up on time home, it seemed to me, but everything was enveloped in secrecy. We couldn't operate with the names, we were using only **nom de guerre**.

Q: Mm-hm, what was yours?

A: **Tabacca**(ph).

Q: So your pseudonym was **Tabacca**(ph)?

A: **Tabacca**(ph). And then when there was some kind of a **[indecipherable]** which we used to call when the Germans discovered some – somebody that was squealing, and we were in danger of being discovered, I was changed to **Zbeek**(ph)

**Enrysh**(ph).

Q: **Zbeek**(ph)?

A: **Zbeek**(ph) **Enrysh**(ph).

Q: **Enrysh**(ph).

A: Fox – and **Zbeek**(ph) was **[indecipherable]** too –

Q: Okay.

A: – you know, so I change, but normally I am using that **Tabacca**(ph) as a –

Q: As a pseudonym.

A: – my **nom de guerre**, yeah.

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Q: Yeah. So, your father worked there, your sister worked in the food production place, your mother stayed at home and tried to find some way of making meals.

A: Yes.

Q: Did your father ever tell stories of what he would see at the **Ostbahn**? What kind of things he would be translating?

A: When – he often told me about the German trains coming from the eastern front. He said that he saw some kwerp – corpses. I mean, the people without legs, you know, frozen noses, ears. But they were running through the tracks that were separated by some kind of partition, so the civilians wouldn't see them. But he said that casualties were coming from the eastern front, yes.

Q: So he could see these things and he talked about them?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah. And did he work with one particular German if – in – official in particular, or with many?

A: I think with many, because the administration of the railroad was in many hands, you know, but the chief honcho, I don't even know who –

Q: Yeah.

A: – who – who that guy was.

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Q: And what would be the sort of things – he – was he a sort of like an in – in between the – the German bosses and the other workers? Is this where his translation skills were used, for them to translate orders? Or was it in different capacities?

A: He was translating because there were many Poles employed that didn't speak German. But the work assignments that were, let's say, by the Germans to direct certain squads of people to do this kind of work, [indecipherable] repairs, or the – what they call, the platform repairs, or – or is – cleaning up the stations, you know. So he was always called in as a interpreter.

Q: And do you think that he might have been involved in underground work?

A: I – I don't think so. Maybe he was accosted by some people, but I don't think that he was – he was aware of that I was doing, toward the end, but I don't think he was part of it. He, let's say, cooperated, if there was some assignment to report, yes. But I don't think that he was fully sworn in, an-and – and – and working for the – for the underground. Let's say Poles were all members of the underground. We were all, let's say, sympathetic to the people that were actually the activists, you know, and the civilians were cooperating every time there was a situation, a dangerous situation, so they did help.

Q: Like the lady who opened her purse for the gun.

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A: Yeah, yeah. They say with that inscription, and I said **nur für Deutsche**, we played the joke on Germans, because somehow the **buchhandlung**, there was some

—

Q: A bookstore.

A: — bookstore, in the German part of the ci-city, we bought a lot of these **opaski**, what was this? Armbands.

Q: The armbands, mm-hm.

A: Armbands, **nur für Deutsche**, you know. And then we started putting in on the lampposts, telegraph posts, everything that was vertically up, you know, we put these things around, **nur für Deutsche**. And they caught that thing after a while, and that was repercussions.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Just like repercussions was — the Germans used the sign of victory. The **Pilsudski** square in center of **Warsaw**, that's where the tomb of unknown soldier is located. It still exists, partially, the uprising — survived the siege of 1939. There are only three or four columns. If you've been in **Warsaw**, maybe you saw it, the tomb of unknown soldier. Anyway, this was **Pilsudski** square. When **Hitler** came to **Warsaw** for the victory parade, as a gift they changed the name of many streets to German sounding names, and this was changed to **Adolf Hitlerplatz**. And in front

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of **Poniatowski** monument, they put a big sign of Victoria, and that victory sign underneath was **Deutschland siegt am allen fronten**.

Q: Okay, **Germany** is victorious on all fronts.

A: On all the fronts. The word **siegt**, we changed **S** to **L**, and the **so** – **Deutschland liegt am allen fronten**.

Q: So that mean – **allen fronten**.

A: You know, this – this was a very –

Q: And how would you translate that?

A: The German lies on all the fronts. You know, flat. So this, they didn't like it at all, because many places they had **Deutschland siegt am allen fronten**. And there were propaganda signs by Dr. **Goebbels**, even showing a Polish soldier wounded, and **Churchill**, and the Polish soldier is saying, **England**, this is your deed. I don't know if you saw it in some of the books.

Q: No. So – oh the – so the fact –

A: That the guilt – the guilt lies in engl – with **England**, you know, that –

Q: That **Poland** is o – okay.

A: – they are guilty of – of our suffering, and so on. There was tremendous shock, the time I – that was 1943, around the springtime, March or – March, I think. There was mutual agreement between **Poland** – let's say the government, Polish

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government in exile in **England**, **Sikorski**, with ma – with the Russians, fighting against common enemy.

Q: Correct.

A: But, when there was **Katyn** discovery, what happened is that the Germans advanced, and they stop at **Smolensk**, **Charkow**. They found this massive graves – graves, Polish graves. These were places of execution of the Polish officers that were captured during that attack on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March.

Q: September.

A: I mean, 17<sup>th</sup> of September, 1939, when they stabbed us in the back.

Q: Right.

A: They deported million and a half Poles to **Siberia**, and they separated the military personnel to be, let's say, kept in the different camps. Out of this they selected the officers. The officers were the officers of reserves, so there were, you know, lawyers, doctors, professional officers and all kind of intelligentsia that was part of that 200-some 20 prisoners of war that these Russians captured. Out of this they selected the officers, and they were executed in **Katyn**.

Q: So you're talking 220,000?

A: Two hundred twenty military personnel.

Q: Okay. Only 220 –

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A: Thousand, out of which –

Q: A tow – thousand, mm-hm.

A: – they selected the –

Q: The officers.

A: The officers, and so on. They –

Q: So what happened when the graves were discovered? How is that received in **Warsaw**?

A: As the Germans advanced, and they discovered – immediately the Russian propaganda was saying that the Germans did it, you know, and they tried to blame the Russians for this. The Germans, to prove the case, they have asked the higher ranking officers, British, French, and then whoever was there from the western European **POW** camps, and they form a commission. And this commission was joined by the Red Cross, and they all went to the passive disc – discovery of these big, massive graves, and they selected the caliber of the guns that they were using to shoot them in the back –

Q: Okay, I want to make sure I understand. They selected not only th – they asked not only the international Red Cross, but their own prisoners of war that they had captured –

A: Yes.



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Q: They formed a commission from some of these selected people –

A: Yes.

Q: – who were prisoners themselves, to go to the site of the mass graves –

A: Yes.

Q: – and do what?

A: Exhume the bodies. Check, you know, some of the insignias, dog tags, and the –  
the – the bullets that normally they found the skulls with the hole in the back,  
because the prisoners were tied in the back, walked into the room, and shot by the  
**NKVD** –

Q: Okay.

A: – in the back of their heads.

Q: Okay.

A: So this was a shock for me, when I walked into classroom, and I saw my teacher  
crying, Mrs. **Bernisz**(ph).

Q: Okay.

A: Or **Umlaut**.

Q: Or **Umlaut**.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: **Bernisz**(ph), yeah.

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A: **Bernisz**(ph), you know. Her brother, Lieutenant **Bernisz**(ph), a Polish lieutenant – she admitted that she was of German descent, even for generations in – in **Warsaw**. So she says – she was crying, you know, and I ask her now, why do you cry ma'am? What happened? You know, she just simply pushed a Red Cross card, a notification postal card to me, and then I ripped it over, and I looked at this, and that was his name listed among the bodies exhumed from that mass grave.

Q: Oh.

A: And this changed entirely, the diplomatic relations with the Polish government in exile. They were broken, these relations were broken, and the Russians ignored the free legal Polish government. They said that this is not true, the Germans did it, and we were siding with the fascists, you know. Th-The – the regular way of the Russian lies that are – even now you can s – listen to **[indecipherable]** and – and – and – and see how nicely he forms certain ways of how to do the right thing the Russian way.

Q: I see. Let's go back to these events. So people discovered that – **Warsaw** begins to discover that these missing officers have been murdered by the rus – the Soviet forces.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You find out in a very personal way, through your teacher.

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A: Teacher, yes.

Q: How did it – how did people find out in general about – was this something that the Germans were – were broadcasting?

A: Well, they were the – they were drumming it up. Germans were drumming it up, and the situation was even getting worse and worse, because the Polish formations of soldiers in **Russia**, under the command of General **Anders** –

Q: Yes.

A: – there was a situation when **Sikorski** met with **Stalin** and all the other big brass, Russian brass in – in – in **Moscow**, I think, and he asked about, where are the Polish officers? Because when we formed these units, Polish units to fight the Germans, where are the officers? And the Russians responded by saying, you know, they were somewhere in **Manchuria** and they run away. They escape from the captivity. They never admitted – they – you know when they admitted? When – I forgot his name, that Russian prior to **Gorbachev**, ye – ye – **yench** –

Q: Oh, prior to **Gorbachev**?

A: **Gorbach** – **yelchin** – **yelchin** –

Q: **Yeltsin** was after **Gorbachev**.

A: After **Gorbachev**?

Q: Yeah.

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A: Yeah.

Q: Prior to **Gorbachev** was **Chernenko**.

A: **Chernenko**?

Q: And then was **Andropov**.

A: No, one of them, I think **Yeltsin** was the one who admitted for the first time that this was the **NKVD** job, that what they did to the Polish officers.

Q: So we're talking well over 50 years later.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes. And – and – and **Gorbachev** admitted too, and he sealed off that this was the Russian doing.

Q: Okay. Your – let's talk a little bit about your activities. Your e – inducted formally into the Home Army at the ripe old age of 12 - 13?

A: Twelve –

Q: Twelve?

A: – 13, yeah.

Q: And what was your involvement? Tell us about that.

A: My involvement – when I was sworn in, we were paramilitary because of the age, you know. There was **Gray Ranks**, **Szare Szeregi** we used to call Polish **SS**.

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You know, **Szare Szeregi**, Gray Ranks. That was sort of divided by age, you know, **Zawiszacy** were the youngest ones, which was a part of it. That was from, let's say, 12 to about 15. And then **Skoly Bojowe**, the – the military schools, were from, let's say 15 - 16, up to about 18. And then was – third group was the gr – **Grupa Sztrumowa**, the storming groups. These were guys 18 and up. That was a full military preparations, they were train in the forests for military action, and that military action was called the tempest – **zboże** tempest. And they were fully military organization. The lower group –

Q: So you're saying there were – there were three different categories.

A: Three different categories guided by age. So let's say the **Skoly Bojowe**, some guys were lying their age to join, you know, to be more active in the more advanced group, let's say, **Skoly Bojowe**. So they pretended they are different –

Q: They're older.

A: They're older, you know, the husky one. I was always small – small and puny, so I couldn't even pretend that, so – anyway, they put me in that **Szare Szeregi**, and they put me in the platoon one, and this was the squad of yul – the **regina(ph)** **yulka(ph)**. That was in **[indecipherable]** – what our activities were. So we were sabotaging the German vehicles as much as we could, you know. Even methods like – the Germans used the artificial fuel, **gasholz**. **Gasholz** was almost a – a – a – a

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[**indecipherable**] on a car, mounted, where they were using hardwood to – to – to burn, and form the methane gas that was actually the propelling –

Q: Agent.

A: – energy of the cars. So there was an air intake, and we used to put potatoes into the air intake and that thing would die. We put sugar into tanks, then the Germans introduced [**indecipherable**]

Q: But aren't these – we – then – then, but these are deficit items, the potatoes, and the sugar.

A: Yes, yes, they were deficit items, but necessary. So they were sacrificed.

Q: Okay.

A: And then we were using all kind of propaganda posters to counteract the German propaganda posters. Like, for instance, the mysterious death of General **Sikorski** in **Gibraltar**. When General **Sikorski** was visiting Polish troops in the Near East, le – **Lebanon, Palestine** at that time, he was on the way back to **London**, and they made a stop in **Gibraltar**. You know the **Gibraltar Straights**?

Q: Yes, sure, sure.

A: **Africa** continent –

Q: Sure, sure.

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A: – you know, European? So, there was a mysterious death that the plane landed in the water, because the steering mechanism didn't work.

Q: Okay.

A: Puzzling – puzzling item was that at that time the governor of that British base was **Philby**. You heard of **Philby**?

Q: **Kim Philby**.

A: **Kim Philby**. That was an agent, a communist. He was buried as a brigadier general of **NKVD**. This – this guy was actually – **Philby** was the secret agent allowed to – to have access to th-the top secrets of American state.

Q: Well, **MI6**.

A: Ducas – yes.

Q: Yes, **MI6** is –

A: **MI6** is a British –

Q: That's right.

A: – but I mean, the **CIA** or whatever, we had the security system here in the **United States**. Him –

Q: It wasn't the **CIA** yet, but it was the – during the war –

A: **SOS**?

Q: **OSS**.

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A: **OSS**, yes.

Q: **OSS**.

A: So this was a very mysterious death, and he was buried in the – in the – in – the only guy that survived was pilot, **Prchal – Prchal**?

Q: **Prchal**.

A: **Prchal**. He was a Czech pilot.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: The plane was a Liberator, I think, and when that thing ended up in water, most of these – even daughter of General **Sikorski**, and some liaison officers, British officers died. So the only survivor was **Prchal**.

Q: Okay, and this is what year?

A: This was, I think fort – July '43.

Q: All right. And so how did that show up in the propaganda in **Warsaw**? So, how –

A: How these things here, the wa – the – the posters were printed with the mysterious death and tragic death of our leader. How the thing was, I think, the **BBC**.

Q: Mm-hm. And so you would – the po –



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A: And we were posting this – let's see, there was sign about what, 15 inches by 12 inches, you know, with the inscription, General **Sikorski** tragic death in **Gibraltar** and so on. We were posting in on any streets, main streets in **Warsaw**, to notify the public of what happened, you know. Not all had the access to – to **BBC** reports.

Q: Did you have a radio at home?

A: I had a crystal radio, you know, something.

Q: What's a crystal radio?

A: Crystal radio di – was some kind of a magnetic stuff, with the earphones, that you could pick some of the waves, you know, from the air.

Q: So, you'd have an earphone –

A: Yeah.

Q: – a – you'd have earphones on –

A: Yeah.

Q: – and then you'd have some sort of – what did it look like?

A: It was – look like a cr – a crystal, a metallic crystal, silver dots in it. But that was a poor reception.

Q: So, but it – it wasn't even a box, it was just like a little knob, or something like that.

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A: Knob, yeah. But friends of ours that we used to go and visit, they had their radio in the big heating – heating ovens.

Q: Okay.

A: Heating ovens. That the radio was mounted in the back, and at night we used to listen to the **BBC** program. And you know, there was a special section in **AK** that was, let's say, printing out on the basis of true news, because the German news were always partial on protecting the German side, and they never admitted their –

Q: Weaknesses.

A: – what was mistakes and –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and things like that. They were always trying to minimize their losses, and maximize they – whatever they needed to – to – to tell us to bra – break the morale of the occu – occupied nations.

Q: So your – so you would be sabotaging the cars –

A: Sabotaging the cars, and then a second assignment was that, since there were two main bridge – two main bridges across the **Vistula** River to the eastern front, our assignment was to stay at hidden places, and mark and count the equipment, the armaments that went over the bridge. Tanks, armor cars, any cars, any guns, anything that was on wheels. So we used to have charts and mark these things to

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send later on to our headquarters, which in turn sent it over to – to **London**. That was very useful, because the Brits knew, you know, what strength actually, the Germans are sending to the eastern front, that this was a sign to us on two bridges; **Poniatowski** bridge, and **Kierbedzia** bridge. So very often my duty was to be on the observing observer's point.

Q: So, until you mentioned this, I figured most of those things that you would be doing, you'd have to do in the evenings, when that – when night fell.

A: Not in the beginning. We had these garbage – little garbage carts –

Q: Yeah.

A: – you know, that there sometimes were – tilted them over. And under the cover, we were sitting there and doing all kind of dangerous markings in the different charts to – to counter the – the – the pieces that were across the bridge.

Q: I see, so in the – in the daytime you would observe –

A: After the police hours, at night, wi – you know, daytime, sure, we were doing this something by hearts, you know, watching and sitting on the curb of the sidewalk, you know, watching –

Q: Just like that.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

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A: Watching this. And what else did we do dirty for the Germans.

Q: For the Home Army.

A: This was – you know, we were very critical of people going to – to – to movie theaters, and we had a saying, **tylko świnie siedzą w kinie**.

Q: What does that mean?

A: Only the pigs sitting in the movie theaters.

Q: And why would that be?

A: We used to – yeah, we used to put the name with the tar, you know, on the – on the entrance to the theaters. And that worked.

Q: But why would – why would that be –

A: [**indecipherable**] the money that was spent by the Poles that went to the armaments of the – this was government – the German government controlled.

Q: I see, so – I see. So it wasn't that people wanted to have some relief, an-and see some sort of fantasy and escape from reality, it was because it was a way of helping the economy.

A: Yes.

Q: The German economy.

A: Yes. There was another scene that I remember. See, they set up – when the war started, the **Barbarossa Operation** started, there was a big empty square right by

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the central railroad station, so the Germans built a big screen to show their victorious march, **drang nach osten**, push to the east. The **Barbarossa Operation**, they were showing.

Q: So that's June 1941, mm-hm.

A: Yes. They were showing, you know, the [indecipherable] **Kraków**, all the areas that were taken away from the Soviets, they were taking Russian prisoners by thousands, by thousands. And – and – and the Russians were giving up. They didn't have the spirit, they didn't have the good officers at that time. Why they didn't have the good officers? Because the officers were **chistka**. You know what a **chistka** is?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: The – **Stalin** in 1935 noticed that there were some kind of plot to – that they were trying to –

Q: Overthrow him.

A: – overthrow him. And this was among the Russian officers.

Q: Was it really a plot, or did he think it was a plot?

A: There was something that the **Stalin** was so upset, that he immediately ordered them to be put behind the bars, and many of them were eliminated. There was this case, and also – what else they – they were trying? Oh see, there was a lack of a – of

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a higher command among the Russians at the time when the German were pushing forward.

Q: Okay, so it meant – it meant that in **Warsaw**, you'd have these big screens up, and – and you – and people would see –

A: At the central station, yes –

Q: And people would see?

A: Ye – they – you know, people were curious always, you know, when they saw the –

Q: So it was like an open movie theater?

A: Like an open movie theater. There was no drive-in, but just an open – open theater, and the people wanted to know, even there were the – at the time, these were the true things. The blitz – the German blitz was so effective that they were taking thousands and thousands of Russian prisoners.

Q: Did they ever show Germans taking Jews up? I mean, in – in those reels, newsreels?

A: No.

Q: Did they ever show anything about what their behavior was to the Jews of the east?

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A: To the Jews of the east, no, I – I don't remember anything like this, but I remember the operation when we used the eggshells.

Q: Okay.

A: Eggshells, we blow up the egg, you know, whites and yellow and –

Q: Red?

A: – and fill it up with – with paint, dark paint.

Q: Okay.

A: And we were sitting in the first row. And when we saw **Hitler** delivering some kind of a speech, we used to toss these things against, and you could see the streaks of the things. And then the Germans, after a while, they discontinued this kind of propaganda. They discontinue.

Q: Well, of – of – of everything that you were telling me about, this sounds the riskiest, cause if somebody fa –

A: That was risky, yes. Our operations even there, were done by the young – youngsters –

Q: Yeah.

A: – they were very risky.

Q: Yeah. And yet – and yet, as you describe, it sounds like quite important, not just work. Not just funny work, or something.

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A: This was important, you know. Even small and let's say people were looking at us as – as – as misbehaving youngsters doing, and risking sometimes, the lives of the grownups. But this was necessary to keep the morale of the people, and – and the morale of the – **Warsaw**, occupied **Warsaw** was very strong, very strong.

Q: I want to turn now to the ghetto. Did you see the walls of the ghetto being built?

A: Yes. This was along the **Leszno** Street. **Leszno** Street, which was parallel to **Wolska Chłodna** thoroughfare that I was saying –

Q: Right.

A: – toward the **Kierbedzia** bridge. **Leszno** – there were the county courts, and the brick wall was separating into two halves, the Aryan side and the Jewish side. And that wall, at that particular part, what they did there was ex-execution of Polish hostages, at **Narutowicz** square, in **Ochota** district of **Warsaw**. And there was a rumor that the people that were shot over there, they were brought in and hung on the balcony metal parts, you know, these vertical –

Q: Sure.

A: – members. They were hung by the necks to – in order to show and let's say show their punishment toward the Poles, what they can expect if they don't stay at the bay and – and – and – and – and listen to the – to the authorities of German – the German administration, as a sign of their rule, they wanted to break their



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morale. So the pilgrimage of war where [indecipherable] were marching along the **Leszno** Street, looking at that thing to – to see what was –

Q: Did you see that too?

A: Yes, yes. I personally saw it. There was about 27. And I was wondering if buddy of mine, **Kazik**(ph), that he was one of them, but I couldn't recognize. You know, people, when they get shot, you know, they freeze in their position. And you could see that these people were not hung there alive.

Q: Oh, I see. So they had already been killed in some form, and were –

A: Yes, and –

Q: – hung there. Okay. And the purpose of it was not – had nothing to do with the ghetto, but it happened to be physically close to the ghetto?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Let's say on the wall, th – at that time, you know, in order to see some kind of a violent reaction by the Poles, they – the Germans had the two machine guns, I remember, on top of the wall, directed to the Poles marching alongside the wall.

Q: Was this a – was this a – was this a mandatory kind of march, you were – you had to go see it?

A: Yes, yes, the people were forced almost, to see it, yeah.

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Q: Okay. And then it was – this also at the time when the ghetto wall was being built, or was already built?

A: No, there – it was already built. That's – I'm speaking of year, I think was 40 – '43.

Q: Okay.

A: It was about time when they built the bridge. If you saw that pianist movie, there was a bridge from the small ghetto to a large ghetto.

Q: Okay.

A: And that bridge was alongside the **Żelazna** Street, right at that triangular s – triangular park –

Q: Okay.

A: – in front of that church of **Boromayus**(ph) in **Warsaw**. And nowadays that Father **Popieluszko's**, let's say, park –

Q: Mm-hm. Yeah, that's after the priest who was murdered during solidarity times.

A: Yes, **Popieluszko**.

Q: Mm-hm, okay.

A: And this was at the point where the two streets divided, you know, there was one, **Chłodna**, going toward the **Hala Mirowska** –

Q: Right.

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A: – which was like a big marketplace. And the other one was **Elektoraina** Street, which was going to – to bank – Bank Square. **Plac Bankowe**, Bank Square, in **Warsaw**.

Q: So does this mean that until then the two ghettos had not been connected?

A: They never were connected.

Q: Even with that bridge?

A: Let's say they never – let's say, they were, on that portion that was from **Wronia** to **Żelazna**, they were connected, small and –

Q: And large.

A: – and large. And then, in order to keep the traffic between small and large was that bridge.

Q: Okay.

A: Was that bridge, so there were –

Q: And so did you –

A: – connections, yes.

Q: Okay. Did you see the building of that bridge?

A: Yes. I saw it when they were erecting, that was a wooden bridge.

Q: Okay.

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A: That was a wooden bridge. The – I – I have the pictures in that album that I show

–

Q: I – as I say, what's important for me is not what is published later, but what are your specific recollections. So –

A: I saw it, yes, because –

Q: You saw it.

A: – I was going to that school for almost a year.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So almost on a daily basis.

Q: And this is where your teach – the school where your teachers were observing you, and then later recommended that you be part of the **AK**?

A: **AK**.

Q: I see.

A: They recruited me there, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: There was, as I said, **Casimira(ph) Bye(ph)**, and **Janina Grotska(ph)** – grotes -- **Grotska(ph)**, yeah.

Q: And Mrs. **Bernisz(ph)**. Or Miss **Bernisz(ph)**.

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A: And **Bernisz**(ph) was the third one, yes. That was already when I was going to the sixth grade, but this was a cover-up, because actually I was going to that first year of high school.

Q: Yeah.

A: But pretending that the schools, the underground schools not – not existed, so –

Q: Sure.

A: – this was used for a cover-up. Trade schools, and all schools that actually Germans considered that they can stay open, like a little business school. But the higher education was out of question. The poli – **Warsaw Polytechnics**, which was very large institution, and well-known; the University of **Warsaw** was also closed, but the faculty, even some of them were murdered in **[indecipherable]** operation. But some teachers that survived, they used to participate in that underground schooling.

Q: I see. Now, in your – in your **AK** unit, you were known only by your pseudonym, not by your real name.

A: Yes.

Q: And did you get to be friends with others, or you know, how large was your cell, how –

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A: The cell was about [indecipherable] number one was [indecipherable] one was about six, seven guys. I knew them all, because we had the meetings.

Q: Okay.

A: We were getting instructions, we were getting training.

Q: Did you ever know their real names?

A: Yes, some of them I knew, yes, yes.

Q: And they knew your real name?

A: Yes, but we was – we were penalized if we used any family names.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: You know, this – this underground, that was actually there was the – one of the largest underground the world, in – in occupied **Europe**, by the Germans. We had – **AK** had the connections, and there were planes coming from **England** to **Poland** to pick up some representatives to the Polish government in **London**, and some important people. So there were a lot of, how should I say, connections and the practical sharing of certain, let's say, things that were very valuable.

Q: Did you know that at the time?

A: About the planes that were coming to **Poland**? No –

Q: Okay.

A: – no, no.

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Q: We need to distinguish that, because –

A: Yes.

Q: – then it gets murky.

A: Yes.

Q: Where it is, the – the adult **Thaddeus Gubala** is talking about something, and where it is the experience of the child.

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm. I didn't know the operation, the secret operation, but after the war I was engrossed in all kind of reading books, whatever I could find, because we were, let's say, eager to learn what was happening behind our backs, you know, at that time.

Q: Sure, sure.

A: So, the underground was very effective, and very helpful to the allies.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't know if I can mention right now –

Q: If it's your – excuse me, I'm going to interrupt; is it your experience?

A: That was my experience that I knew the operations, and the help that we were getting from **England**.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

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Q: Then tell me about it.

A: Because we were getting the – I mean, the higher groups, there was even money sent to **Poland**.

Q: And did you ever see any of it?

A: No, I would – I wasn't paid in –

Q: In money.

A: – dollars, no.

Q: Were you paid in anything?

A: No, no.

Q: Okay.

A: We were – we were the youngsters, and very helpful in the operation, but sort of secondary help.

Q: Well, you're young –

A: Yes.

Q: – you're children. And I'm sure they didn't want to put you in too much danger.

A: That's right. Even during the uprising, we were not subject to the strict military rules.

Q: Yeah. Tell me wi – I want to come now to the – both uprisings. Did you see any part of the ghetto uprising?



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A: As I was walking to school, this was, I think toward the end of May – no, toward the end of April, because May, th-the uprising stopped. It was liquidated by, I would say, May 19, I believe.

Q: I think it – I don't know the exact date, but I think it was mid-April that it started.

A: Yes, mid-April.

Q: Yeah.

A: During that time, the ghetto was on fire. General **Stroop**, he brought to ghetto – he brought the Ukrainians that were serving with the Germans. I notice Latvians, because they had different, dark uniforms that were part of the guard, around. And there were Germans in the supervisory sort of positions as military. This – what I notice, that a lot of people on the Aryan side were looking from the gates of their apartments, you know, looking toward the ghetto to see how sometimes people were throwing people out of the windows. Instead of being burned, you know, they committed suicide. I saw flames coming out because the Germans actually set fire as they were conquering –

Q: Clearing up, yeah, right.

A: – clearing up the – the segments. I saw this, yes. Because that point of bridge, you know, that I said, two divided streets, **Elektoraina** and **Chlodna**, this was a

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main gate. Main gate. Across kitty corner from that building there, there was **Vacha**(ph), there was a very strong German point that the guardsmen were the **Feldpolizei**; that was the military police, you know –

Q: Okay.

A: – they were armed, and there was a bunker, bunk – concrete bunker to protect their segment of the building. The building is – even now that's standing, it survived the uprising.

Q: Wow. Okay.

A: Yeah. And that bunker actually there is the original bunker that is shown in that uprising museum in – in **Warsaw**.

Q: So you would see the flames of these – of the buildings.

A: Flames, and the people jumping out of the windows, yes.

Q: You would see that too?

A: Mm-hm. Because at –

Q: Was there a smell?

A: – when – when the Germans – when the Germans were setting up fire –

Q: Yeah.

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A: – at the ground level, you know, and the flames started shooting up, some of them I saw escaping from one building, jumping over to another one just to get away from the buildings that are set on fire.

Q: I see.

A: Very cruel behavior was of the Jewish police.

Q: Wa – in what way?

A: In what way? They were responsible for gathering the Jews for that shipment to **Treblinka**.

Q: Okay.

A: And they were cruel, because they were responsible to deliver that many Jews as the Germans ordered them.

Q: Well, what choice did they have?

A: They were very cruel. And then, the – the –

Q: But again, I –

A: – producer – producer of that film –

Q: Mm-hm, which one?

A: **Kanista**(ph).

Q: Mm-hm.

A: When they had the premier of the film in – in – in **Tel Aviv** –

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Q: Okay.

A: – the people were whistling and – and – and – and really criticizing that this is not true that the Jews were so cruel toward the Jews.

Q: I have to – I – i-it can all be true. I don't know that. But in – in our discussion, if you – if it's something that you say, I need to substantiate it with, did you see it?

A: Do – yes, did I see it.

Q: And if you saw it – and how – in – in what way did you see it. So, did you see this cruelty?

A: Yes, I did, yes –

Q: In what way?

A: – I di – in what way? Where the people were actually were set on fire in the windows, jumping out.

Q: All right, by the Jewish police?

A: Combined forces. There were Jews and there were Germans, and there were Ukrainians guards at the main gate. So I saw this, yes, I saw this.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: I saw, let's say before the Jewish uprising, I saw the groups of Jews that were recruited to work on the Aryan side for the German factories, whatever they had.

Q: Okay.

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A: Marched by the blue policemen, or the German policemen, toward their destination where they were working. There was, let's say, sometimes 50 - 60 Jews marching through the Aryan side to their place where they worked.

Q: Okay.

A: And the behavior of – toward the Jews was awful. I mean, for the Poles that helped the Jew, you know –

Q: Yeah.

A: – that was the only country in **Europe** that for helping the Jew, there was a death penalty. The only country in **Europe** that if they saw you helping Jew, you could be shot on the spot. And if they didn't do this, then they arrested your family, or even some of the buildings where this occurred, you know –

Q: Okay.

A: – they were all liquidated.

Q: So you would see – you would see guards be cruel to Jews who were being taken to work outside of the ghetto on the Aryan side?

A: Yes. There was kicking, pushing, shouting, and things like this, yes.

Q: Okay. Did – oh, I had a question, and it just escaped my mind. And you saw people jumping from roof to roof while the ghetto uprising was going on?

A: As the flames were spreading out, they were running away, yes.

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Q: Did – was there a smell coming from the ghetto?

A: Oh yes, day and night, because the Germans were bombing ghetto during the night. There were – they brought heavy guns, and they were using the armor cars when the uprising started, because the group of fighting Jews, there was about 350 of them, you know, that some of them were equipped with the weapons delivered by the **AK**, and they were heroic in their attempt. They knew that this is the only solution, is to die fighting.

Q: Did – were there any Jewish boys in your cell?

A: In my cell no, no.

Q: Were there any in the – in that category in the **AK**, you know – you know, in this youngest age category, that you knew of?

A: Repeat that question.

Q: Okay. You explained to me there were three categories; the gray –

A: Gray ranks –

Q: The Gray Ranks.

A: **Zawiszacy**.

Q: Yeah.

A: **Szkoly Boyowa**.

Q: Yeah, and the oldest.

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A: And then **Grupy Szturmowa**.

Q: Right. In that youngest category, did you know of any Jewish boys who were in there, who might have escaped from the ghetto?

A: No, no.

Q: Okay.

A: There were no Jews, but I heard that there were some –

Q: Okay.

A: – in the upper ranks.

Q: I see.

A: In the upper ranks. And especially during the uprising – maybe I'm time-wise jumping too far ahead.

Q: Which, which, the **Warsaw** uprising?

A: The **Warsaw** uprising. There were – in the ghetto there were Jews that were brought from **Hungary**, but they were protected by their skills, you know, tailors, shoemakers that were contributing to the war machine.

Q: The German war machine.

A: The German war machine.

Q: Right.

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A: And **Zośka** battalion, which was one of the leading scouts, but – Boy Scouts, but they were a – 18 and up. So they freed about 350, and they called the gang **Shufka**(ph). **Gesia** Street was the street in the ghetto, and they had these barracks where they were working –

Q: Okay.

A: – for the German war machine. So some of these guys joined the Polish units during the **Warsaw** uprising.

Q: When they were liberated, however, when were they liberated, by the – by the si –

A: By the **AK** people.

Q: Yeah, when?

A: This was 1944, I would say the middle of – middle of August.

Q: But my question is, by that point, the ghetto is obliterated. There is no more ghetto. The uprising had been put down –

A: Yes, the ghetto – the ghetto was put out.

Q: Okay.

A: I'm speaking of some remains of the skilled Jews that were used for the war machine, that were separated from the rest of the Jews in – in **Shufka**(ph), and these were the Hungarian Jews that were kept.



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Q: Okay. Hungarian Jews weren't deported from **Hungary** until March '44. So, in other words, they couldn't have been part of the **Warsaw** ghetto. They couldn't have been part of the **Warsaw** ghetto that was obliterated, and yet they're kept alive. They must have been brought in later.

A: I think so. It could be like this, because there was even a negotiation between the allies, the – the Germans demanded trucks for trading freedom for these Jews.

There was something secret that I – I never, let's say, analyzed this so deep, but they were trying to save the Jews by giving some –

Q: Getting some materials for them.

A: – material for them.

Q: I see.

A: But these Jews were brought from **Hungary**, yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Hungarian Jews.

Q: So, it would have been in '44.

A: Yes.

Q: Rather than – rather than any time earlier.

A: Yes, yes. And these –

Q: And that would have been when the ghetto was already a – a – gone.

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A: No, the ghetto, the ghetto, the small and large one was already finished.

Q: Yeah, okay. Okay, so let's talk about your activities in 1943, and 1944, until the **Warsaw** uprising.

A: Well, these activities I mentioned to you, the little sabotage that we had –

Q: It continued.

A: – on the bridges, and then the posters, and then the inscriptions of **PW** –

Q: Right.

A: – in different places, to show that we still existing. And marking the theaters and the – sabotaging the German propaganda slogans. So, this was the activity of 1942 - '43, until the uprising, yes.

Q: So let's turn to the uprising. How do you – what ha – what do you get involved in, what changes in your life to prepare to –

A: What happened, the uprising started on the first of August.

Q: Right, and where were you?

A: I was near – near that **Janusz Korczak** building, and –

Q: Where the orphanage was.

A: Orph – the cro – across the street, yes, and the last meeting we had with the patrol one, we said that we are going together at **Kartselak**(ph), which was a marketplace right at the **Wolska** Street, that main thoroughfare, and **Towarowa**,

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and **Przyokopowa**, this was a large square, like a **Maxwell Street** in **Chicago**, you know, there were little stands that the people were selling. Anything that your heart desire, the black market at that time.

Q: Right.

A: So, the meeting didn't come through because of the beginning of uprising was scheduled for five o'clock [**indecipherable**] stands for **walka(ph)**. And there was supposed to be at five, but it started at the different time. So what happened was that I simply joined the newly formed company, **315**, across the street in that building of **Janusz Korczak**.

Q: Okay.

A: And what the – happened, they assigned me to be the observer. So I was posted on that highest point of that building that was safe from that siege during the 1939. And I was watching the Germans coming **Karolkowa Street**, toward the **Wolska**. This was street – side street, but anyway important, because they tried to clear both sides of **Wolska**, so the German traffic would go free, without any side – side attacks. But what we did over first and second of the uprising day, we build a barricade and a deep ditch on **Karolkowa Street**. So the Germans, when they came over, to the point I saw them, I was reporting down that there is a German armor car waiting, but they hesitating to cross because of the obstacle. Then – this was couple

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days like this, and then, before – actually, before uprising started, I was put to work by cleaning some old rifles that were recovered from the hiding places, for an attack by the grownups, of that School 100. Because School 100 that I attended during – before the war –

Q: Sure.

A: – this whole building was converted to a rest house for the Germans. All the nicer buildings –

Q: The beautiful building where you didn't walk with shoes. Where you walked on your si –

A: Yes, yes, this was converted to a shelter for the Germans that were coming to **Warsaw** to rest, after the battle fatigue –

Q: I see.

A: – whatever they had in the east, or – they were re-convalescence after they were wounded, whatever. Most of the better buildings were taken by the Germans, by the Germans. So anyway, this attack failed, because the Germans were armed to the –

Q: Teeth.

A: – kin. And this thing was a failure.

Q: Okay.

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A: So the next operation, what happened was, on the **V** separation of two streets, **Towarowa** and **Przyokopowa**, there was a German repair shop, for German vehicles. So, we were told that we have to get gasoline for the **Molotov** cocktails. And I remember from 1939 I had these flare – flare gun.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: That was my weapon. There was one guy that – with the saw off **Mauser**, you know, carbine? Anyway, when we – there was about five of us, two mechanics, and there were two, three of younger ones, you know, and we entered that place, the Germans got scared off. They got on a – motorbikes, and they left. So we started getting the cars into some kind of a position that maybe we can start –

Q: Drive them out.

A: – drive them out. So one of the mechanics, you know, he was able to – the car had the four tires on. The others didn't have the tires on because they were over the – what they call, the tunnels, that they were –

Q: That's right, where they were repairing.

A: Repairing, yeah.

Q: Repairing things.

A: So the one with the four tires was okay, so he started this car. But in the meantime, what I was doing is I was collecting into jerry cans –

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Q: Mm-hm.

A: You know the jerry cans are.

Q: Sure.

A: Those 20 liter –

Q: Yes, yes, yes, yes, okay, right.

A: – metal containers. I was sucking – siphoning the gasoline from the ones that –

Q: Were on ther – right.

A: – have the tires on, that was getting ready for repairs.

Q: Okay.

A: So I was able to put about two – two – two of these canisters, jerry cans –

Q: How were you siphoning?

A: With the rubber hose.

Q: And you were sucking it in?

A: Sucking it in. Once it started, you know, then the gasoline was dripping out.

Anyway, I was – this was the most precious liquid at the time, because the company **315** was waiting for delivery of weapons, but it never materialized, you know, they didn't get it. So the most effective weapons were the **Molotov** cocktails. Some of the units that were on the barricade on **Gorzewska** Street, parallel to **Wolska**, right at **Mlynarska**, these were barricades attacked by the Germans, and they were trying

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to really break the opposition at any cost. They were even putting civilians in front of their tanks, and – and – and approaching the Polish points of resistance –

Q: With the civilians in front?

A: Yeah, so we would stop shooting, you know, at our own people. And anyway, I delivered – I could carry the whole jerry can, but I take half of it, couple times. I walked from **Krochmalna**, from that **Janusz Korczak** place, and I carried this over to **Gorczewska** Street, which was a distance of at least five, six, seven blocks, as a small kid, with a friend of mine.

Q: That's not – that's not bad –

A: Yeah.

Q: – that's quite a bit.

A: And you know, they welcomed me at the barricade when I brought that gasoline, because whenever Germans approached – and the houses on the left, and on the right, you know, had these bottles, you know, these things were very dangerous for the Germans [**indecipherable**] we set the fire to a tank, you know, the – the – the crew was jumping out.

Q: Yeah.

A: So this was one of the major operations. Then this other one – oh, this was something that I'll never forget. We were told, for the areas that were already freed

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from the Germans, to hang our national flags in front of the houses. And this was a – boo-boo, because the Germans marked the areas they saw the flags; there were observation planes flying over, and three **Stukas** came over, and bombed again, the area where we lived in.

Q: Oh.

A: They flatten it out. I remember as a ki – that I was – I – I was holding a – a – a radiator, you know, on the first floor, and somehow I was found semi-conscious in the – in the basement.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: From that flattening out?

A: From that flattening out. And then, after this, we all took a shelter in the **Korczak's** building – **Korczak's** building. And then – that was August third or fourth, the Germans brought **R.O.N.A.**, you heard of **R.O.N.A.**? **R-o-n-a**. That was **Russkaya Osvoboditelnaya Narodnaya Armiya**.

Q: Oh.

A: The Russian freedom – freedom army. This was General **Vlasov**, you heard of General **Vlasov**?

Q: Yes.



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A: This was a traitor. This wa – he was a Russian, and he recruited the Ukrainians, and Russians, whoever was available, and some – some Mongols from the **Azure**, to put them to work on Poles, the rebellious Poles, and finish us off.

Q: So in other words, this was a group of Russians who were –

A: Volunteer –

Q: – Russians and other Soviets who were against the **Soviet Union**. That is the –

A: Yes, **Vlasov**, yeah.

Q: Yeah, **Vlasov** armies.

A: **Vlasov** army.

Q: And they not only were against the **Soviet Union**, but they joined forces with the Germans, with the Nazis.

A: Yes. They had the Cossacks –

Q: Hat?

A: – hats, with the **Hakenkreuz**, and the German **Wehrmacht** uniforms, and some of them had the **SS** marks. So they were special troops.

Q: So what was this – what was distinguished about them, aside from their look?

A: Aside from them look, they had that **R.O.N.A.** badges on their left arms.

Q: Okay. And what did they do?

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A: And they were used to especially quench the partisan war – partisan war in the countries occupied by the German armies. These were under the command of General **Bach, von dem Bach**.

Q: **Von dem Bach**, okay.

A: **Von dem Bach**. He was in charge, a specialist for the partisan warfare. He was in **Warsaw** operation on, I think, the fourth or fifth of August. And he was the guy that stopped the mass murder – murders of that district **Wola**. Because during that time when the **R.O.N.A.** came into picture, and they started shooting civilians, 50,000 of them – Soviets lost their lives because they were cleaning up, mercilessly, all the side streets, and every courtyard was a cemetery.

Q: So they were indiscriminate in who they were shooting?

A: Yes, yes. To the point when that was the fifth or sixth of August, I was in the courtyard – that's where we lived – and I was in the basement, and some civilians went into basements and they were hiding there. The windows were covered with the sandbags, and some metal plates to protect from any kind of outside attack.

When the **R.O.N.A.** soldiers came over, they had this German potato mashers, you know, these grenades with that little handle on? They used to combine these grenades together and make the bundle of them, and they used to open that little windows and they were tossing into the basement of people. And this was almost

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unbelievable scream of people dying in the basements. And they took us, the live ones, they took us outside the building. You know, my father was already with – old men separated, and I was pulled by the women on the left side. They put some kind of a babushka on my head.

Q: A kerchief on your head?

A: Yes, and they took us into captivity, we were running along this street of **Krochmalna**, then **Karolkowa**, to **Wolska** Street, then we kept running westbound on **Wolska** Street. And that time I saw last time my father standing already with the hands up in front of **Biernatzki** – **Biernatzki** Palace. That was a big structure right in the back of that **Clement's** church. There was the last time I saw my father.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yes. And we were driven by force, running all the way to **Warsaw** west station. The electrical trains were still operating, **Warsaw** west.

Q: Do you know what – excuse me, I'm going to inter – do you know what happened to your father?

A: Well, there were two stories that I heard. That the executions of men during the vols – vol – vol – **Wola** massacre, the execution of the men were two places: one, the Saint **Albert** church on **Wolska** Street, and then **Franaszek** factory. This was chemical factory when they were executing men by hundreds and hundreds of them.

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And when they ki – were killed, I heard that they were piled up, you know, the live ones were piling the dead ones, and pouring gasoline over, and burning.

Q: And you think that he's in either one of these places?

A: Yes, yes. And I think there is a cemetery, **Wolski Cmentarz**. **Wolski** cemetery, that they say that they buried ashes of about 50 - 60,000 people from **Warsaw**, all over. They were exhuming the dead and burning them. And by weighing, you know, how much ash you get from one person, there were some 12 or 14 big trucks carrying the ashes into a common grave at **Wolski Cmentarz**. And I visited this place last time I was there in August. And there was a big ceremony, there was American ambassador, there were Polish president **Komorowski**, and our new allies there was the German **Bundeswehr**, two officers, I took some pictures of them; politely watching what was happening there. It was a big ceremony, and the people came and by – by hundreds, thousands almost, to participate. They were four spiritual leaders. There was a rabbi, there was Orthodox church, there was evangelical pastor, and a Catholic, you know. And they were all praying for those that were – this is the largest cemetery in the world actually, of 50 - 60,000 ashes of people buried. And they have the whole yard [**indecipherable**] to build with these stones, you know, they look like a skull. And one older woman, she said, do you know the symbol of these stones? But this is large area I'm speaking of. And I said

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no, I don't know. These are supposed to, let's say symbolize the heads of the people that were buried there. **Wolski Cmentarz**.

**Q: Wolski Cmentarz.** What happened to your mother and sister?

**A:** Mother and sisters, they were all put into concentration camp **Pruszków**.

**Pruszków** was concentration camp 121. **Pruszków** was the station, let's say, in the western part of the city. That's where they converted railroad repair shop into a camp for the civilians brought to it.

**Q:** Got it.

**A:** So when we were in **Pruszków**, the 600,000 [indecipherable] went through two camps: **Ożarów** and **Pruszków**.

**Q:** And I had interrupted you to find out about your father. So you were telling me where you were being herded to, more or less, you were being forced to run to.

**A:** Yes, this was –

**Q:** So –

**A:** – to **Warsaw** west. **Warszawa zachodnia**, **Warsaw** west. That's where we boarded the trains that took us over to **Pruszków**, that was I don't know, 20 kilometers away. **Pruszków** was a camp where they were loading us into cattle cars after two, three days of – of tremendous, tumultuous situation. People were looking for each other, lost you know, wounded, sick. There was a Red Cross, and there was

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that help e – help. This whole thing was a chaos, you know, there was the – people were shocked. They were s-semi-alive. They were put by 70 to a freight car. When they loaded the freight car, there was about 40 – 40 – 40 cattle cars. And that train moved toward **Reich**, toward **Germany**. And we were transported – the first stop after seven days, no water, no nothing, you know, the car was locked. And there were –

Q: No food, no water.

A: Yeah, and there was barbed wire in the windows. We had one – one older guy with the – with the knife, scissors. So he was cutting the openings in the floor of that car, so this was our –

Q: Toilet?

A: – toilet. Toilet, yes. There was 70 people almost, in the car. You know, first stop was **Oranienburg**. You heard of **Oranienburg**? It was a concentration camp that the Germans built – built for the Germans, and all those that did not comply with the German philosophy –

Q: Politics, right, right.

A: – yes. So the – first were Germans. And then, what happened there, there was night, and I remember **Berlin** on fire, you know, there was – under bombing, and I think that the British at night were bombing it, because they were throwing these

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phosphor bombs, and they looked like a Christmas tree. So anyway, I peeped through that hole –

Q: And this was probably late August, or something? When was this, mid-August, late August?

A: That was the beginning of August. There was the seven – no, eight te – middle, middle, yeah.

Q: Middle of August.

A: Middle of August. And when we stopped there, what happened is that they disconnected three or four cars. And the train was moving at night, not during the daytime, because daytime, any moving train was attacked by the –

Q: Allies.

A: – by the allied, you know, so at night we moved, and the next stop was **Weimar**.

Q: Oh yeah.

A: **Weimar**, near to **Buchenwald**.

Q: Exactly, exactly.

A: Yeah. That was a place that **Schiller** and **Goethe** was creating.

Q: Right.

A: Yes, **Weimar**.

Q: A buti – i-it's the biggest irony. It's a beautiful little town.

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A: Yeah.

Q: And right next to it is **Buchenwald**.

A: **Buchenwald**, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: And so they disconnected three or four cars. They were distributing the mar – the manpower according to whatever they –

Q: Needed.

A: – scheduled, yes.

Q: Right.

A: So after that, you know, the train started moving at night again, and the next stop, I – I – we knew already that something's gonna happen there. We don't – I use the word **[indecipherable]** you know, as I mentioned to you on the phone, that you didn't know the expression –

Q: That's right.

A: – that we either will be freed going through a stack, through a chimney.

Q: Yes.

A: Or we will – gonna be put to work for the **Reich**.

Q: Yeah.



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A: So when they moved the train from **Weimar, Buchenwald**, the next stop was, after a few days – at night, we travel at night, and we stopped at **Bergen-Belsen**.

The –

Q: Oh, you were making all the tourist stops.

A: The sightseeing tour, nice.

Q: Yes.

A: **Bergen-Belsen** was a place well-known already. That's where they killed many, many Jewish people and international people that were kept in the – in this death machine. So again, there was a segregation commission. We were out in the field, you know, so latrines were dug up, so we could satisfy our physical necessities there. And after medical commission, you know, they, luckily, put us into a group of people that can be still used for work.

Q: Okay.

A: And then **Bergen-Belsen**, they took us to camp. This was near **Hannover, Lehrte, Lehrte, l-e-h-r-t-e, Lehrte**.

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

A: And this was a junction, a railroad junction, important ra-railroad junction between **Hannover** and all the **ruhrgebeit**(ph) coming through **Hannover** toward **Berlin [indecipherable] Berlin** and all the other main cities. So there – the camp

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was located on the – right by the railroad junction. There were at least four or five railroad tracks, the main ones. Inside was the reloading ramps, about seven or eight reloading zeks – that they were distributing the war material, packages on whatever the Germans stole in the western **Europe**, you know, that were sending over to their families in **Germany**. So we worked for 12 hours a day.

Q: So you – that's what you would be doing, is – is reloading packages from one to another?

A: Yes, from one car, say that was sorted out that this car will go to **Bremen**, this car will go to **Hamburg**, you know, so we were distributing, we were getting the shipment orders, and we knew what to do. In this camp, there was international society. They were French, they were Belgians, they –

Q: Were you slave labor, or were you treated as prisoners of war?

A: No, this was – th-this was a – a thing that the Germans didn't know what to do with this, because on the 18, the pressure of allies in the west, exerted on the German government, forced the Germans to take all the **AK** people as allied army, and this was treated as the prisoners of war. Since I was the younger one, and then I couldn't be, and then I was as a slave laborer, put to work. And this camp had the Frenchmen, Belgians, and there was a – a – Yugoslavs that – not the **Tito** guys, but **Mikhailovich**?

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Q: That's right, **Mikhailovich** [indecipherable] that's right.

A: **Mikhailovich**. So Serbs were there, and the Russians were kept in a different –

Q: Place.

A: – section because they didn't recognize the Geneva Convention, they didn't have any Red Cross. Some of the barracks were marked with the Red Cross sign on top, because of the importance of that railroad junction. So they tried to show the allies up in the air, don't bomb, because this is a hospital, or whatever they thought for a moment. But we were put on these ramps, and we worked hard for a bowl of soup –

Q: So was your –

A: – piece of bread.

Q: Was your conditions worse because you weren't considered a prisoner of war?

A: I would say about even.

Q: Okay.

A: Even, because, you know, the **Reich** at that time was already coming, in that agony, to an end; so they really didn't know what to do with us.

Q: You were 15, yes?

A: Yeah.

Q: You were 15 years old.

A: Four – 15 - 15, yes, yes.

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Q: Yeah, 15.

A: So, working on that ramp, we were stealing food sometimes. I'll never forget when I ate the pound of butter because I – I took the piece, you know, brick of butter like this, and the German guard, he noticed that, you know, so he followed me, and he was waiting, and I went to satisfy my physical necessities, and I – to cover it up, I ate almost a pound of butter.

Q: My word.

A: Took a – I remember one Ukrainian there, he stole some tobacco leaves. And we were checked on the end of the day, on – on our end of the day check-up, as we were leaving for the camp again, th-the poor Ukrainian, or Russian at that time, whatever was – he had a cap, and from the cap there's some parts of the leaves sticking out. And the Gestapo ask him now, did – what did you steal this time, **Ivan**? He says, nothing, nothing. And then he lifted up his –

Q: Cap.

A: – cap, and the leaves started flying down, and that was the end of the guy because they took him right away to the side. There was a bunker, there was a bunker in the middle of the station that looked like a innocent building like, but the walls were about a yard thick. During the unexpected alerts, when the big boys were

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coming over, and they were coming over by numbers, Americans were flying these fortresses, you know, that you would pray more and more, please.

Q: Yeah.

A: They were the white streaks of their frozen exhaust.

Q: Yeah.

A: And this was a massive attack, you know, because that was the method that they were bombing was the carpet method.

Q: Carpet bombing.

A: They selected the certain [indecipherable] target [indecipherable] leveled off. Germans –

Q: So did – so did they go into this bunker, the Germans, that you're descry –

A: They used to save us by putting us at the very top. The German civilian families were at the very safest bottom portion. The transit military, Germans that were in transit, you know, going from place to place during the alert, they used to go in there. And we were at the very top. So some of the prisoners of war that signed the agreement that they would like to work for the – you know, as civilians, they were there. So they put us in the very top. We used to sing songs, and all the things that the Germans were getting so aggravated, you know, because we were happy when the bombing was going on. Praying more and more. That was one scene. Another

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scene was that th – there were transports of cattle. They pulled the cattle trains along the ramps, and they sounded the alert. Sometimes alert lasted for three, four, or five days.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So they pulled the trains away, during the alert, they pulled the trains away so they would protect the material, whatever it was there. But when the bombed the train, they opened up these cattle cars. You know, there were so many cows out in the field, running away.

Q: Course. Poor animals.

A: That we started cutting the meat from these cows, and taking it to the barracks, and we smeared the smell of the meat all over the place, so when the German guards came over with the dogs, the dogs were going crazy, because we were hiding the meat in the attics of the barracks. Then we had the meat for a couple days, cooking and eating and so on. You know, this –

Q: And yet the dogs were only smelling the blood.

A: Yeah. They were going crazy. Another scene I remember; we were in the movie barrack, movie barrack, they were showing us their victorious times. Suddenly, explosion took place, a big explosion. These covers that were closing the windows, you know, were blown out. We saw flames all over the place. We run out of the

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barracks, and we saw a plane that was shot down, and landed right between the two rows of barracks.

Q: Oh wow.

A: Yeah, the Germans said, oh finally, we shot one of the American planes, you know. But we were forced to clean the remains next day, and the Germans told us to bring all these human parts, shoes, whatever. Parts that were showing, and I – I found the German belt with the [indecipherable] you know. And – and the human leg and the – in the air force boots, you know, they were special boots, heavy, fur-lined, you know. And they finally recognized that this was a German plane. I think it was **ME110**, I think, **Messerschmitt 110**, two engine plane. Though there was sadness among them, to see that there was their own plane. What other scene I – I remember? Oh, this was the times when we started – they remove us. When the front was getting closer and closer, they decided to move us out from the camp, and –

Q: So were you there for about half a year? How long were you there for?

A: I'd say [indecipherable]

Q: In that –

A: – October, November, December. December, January, February, March, A-April. So about seven, eight da – eight months.

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Q: In **Lehrte**, mm-hm.

A: Yeah, yeah, **Lehrte** by **Hannover**. This was important town – important town, **Lehrte**, because of the railroad junction. And **Misburg** was another town, **Misburg**, where they had the artificial – artificial gasoline plant, you know, and they were – dry distillation, whatever methods they were using, but they were making the gasoline. This was very, very, let's say sensitive [**indecipherable**]. The Germans used to use a special fog in order to envelop and cover it up. So we were getting the clouds of the fog sometimes into that camp, so we couldn't breathe.

Q: Yeah.

A: Anyway, when they were –

Q: Did you speak German? At that point, did you speak German?

A: Yeah, pretty – I could understand very well, and – because we were – we were taught German during the time of occupation among the Gray Ranks.

Q: Ah, okay.

A: I had the teacher, she had the German name. Not **Benisz**(ph), some other one.

But anyway, my German was pretty – pretty good, in all.

Q: So you – so in some ways that made it a little easier for you. Or – or not?

A: In a way – I don't think so, no.

Q: No?



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A: No, no, cause I didn't – I didn't try to – to give them the privilege, you know. So I was still at heart a – a bloody Pole. So, when they marched us in the – that was near **Senda**(ph) when – when I woke up with that carbine at my belly – you know, th-the – the thing was that the American soldiers had no noise in their army boots, they were quiet at night, so they would – I had that **carabiner** at my belly, you know, they look at me, and – and there was a – a captain, I think, that spoke Polish. He was from – he was from **Detroit. Hamtramck**, as I recall, **Detroit** –

Q: So, are you talking now when you're liberated?

A: Yeah, yeah, the time –

Q: Okay, so you were le – let's talk about, you are marched from **Lehrte** –

A: From **Lehrte** towards – toward **Berlin**.

Q: Okay.

A: And that was sent there on the way, near – near **Hildesheim**, somewhere along that route, that we were intercepted by Americans already. That was the ni-ninth army. There was **Patton** boys heading toward **Pilsen**, I think.

Q: It could very well be, okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And so how did the – there's – you happen to be sleeping, and you feel –

A: Because at night, you know, they kept us –

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Q: Right.

A: – to rest, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: The – the guards – the guards were German **Volkesdeum**(ph). These were the units that are already ready for retirement completely, but in the last call they were put to action.

Q: Right.

A: So the guardsman, I don't know where he was sleeping, but when we – when we got free, the Americans look at us and they said okay, okay guys, let's – follow us. And we went to the back. And the first stop was some kind of a field kitchen, you know, so they started to feeding us, and then the pancakes come into picture.

Q: So you're saying this is your breakfast? Your first –

A: It was the breakfast, yes, it was –

Q: Tell us about what was –

A: – first American breakfast.

Q: Tell us what it consisted of.

A: Consisted of, I had a stack of pancakes, about six. You know, the army pancakes were big. So six of them, and then the big, big glass of – not glass, I mean can of grapefruit juice. We were so hungry and exhausted that I think I ate the whole thing,

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and then I bloated out, and then they took me to the field hospital. To the field hospital because I was in danger of – of –

Q: Yeah.

A: – losing my life. Because, you know, the stomach shrunk –

Q: That's right.

A: – during this starvation time. So later on what happened is, from the camp, **Lehrte** camp, when they brought us back to the same camp.

Q: Oh, did they bring you back? Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: All right.

A: But this time, the Americans –

Q: Are running it, yeah.

A: Yes. The show was in American hands. And that **gemeinschaft** lager

**[indecipherable] Lehrte**. Then the Brits came over, British came over, and the units provided transportation to take us to **Fallingbostel**. **Fallingbostel** was one of the largest **POW** camps in the British zone of **Germany**, so to speak, graphically, that was near – near **Sella, Sella**. –

Q: Oh, that was in the ea –

A: **Diepholz, Diepholz**. Coming –

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Q: So these must have been in what was – what became **East Germany**.

A: No, no –

Q: **Sella**?

A: – no. **Sella** – **Sella**, no. **Sella** –

Q: Is **West Germany**?

A: No, that was **West Germany**, **Sella**, yeah.

Q: Okay, then I'm – I'm – I'm mixed up.

A: **Sella** –

Q: Okay.

A: – **Bergen-Belsen**, yes, the [indecipherable] **Dresden, Leipzig** –

Q: That's **East Germany**.

A: Yeah, that was the eastern **Germany**.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I-In that camp we got under the command of Major **Skwarnicki**, who formed a special **AK** school units, because we were young guys. So they – somehow we got new uniforms, the British uniforms. We got armed.

Q: Wow.

A: Can you imagine this, we had the **Enfield** rifles we were use for patrolling different stores an-and – and camps for weekends. But during the daytime, we were

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designated for schooling time. So I finished the high school in **Fallingbostel** til 1947. I was in military units. This was the army of the **Rhine**.

Q: So tell me, how did you – do you remember the day the war ended?

A: The war ended?

Q: Yes.

A: The peace was signed, I think, April 11.

Q: No, I think later. No?

A: No, April el –

Q: May? No, no, no.

A: No, April 11, I was – I was freed, and the armistice was signed in **Flensburg** by **Dönitz**. He was the successor to the **Hitler**.

Q: But where were you? Do you remember where you were when you heard that – I think the war ended May eighth or ninth, didn't it?

A: May eighth.

Q: Right.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember where you were at that time?

A: May eighth, I was in **Fallingbostel**.

Q: Falli – okay.

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A: Yeah.

Q: **Fallingbostel.**

A: Yeah, because the war was still going on in **Berlin**.

Q: That's right.

A: Yeah.

Q: That's right.

A: So the May eighth. And **Dönitz** was the guy that signed the armistice.

Q: That's right.

A: And this was in **Flensburg**, that's [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah.

A: South of **Denmark**, maybe a little bit west.

Q: So my question is, you stayed there til '47, did you tra – did you want to go home, did you try to find out what had happened to your family?

A: No, this is – this is a de-delicate matter, because the allies were trying to convince us to return back – to – to remove us from their backs, because there was one and a half million refugees, slave laborers in **Germany**, and the countries of their origin were already under Russian occupation. So we had no place to go. So the only thing was saving, let's say Polish necks, were that we had the units that were under British command, that were part of the allied army. The General

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**Marchuk**(ph), and there was the paratroopers division, the **Sosabowskis** that were occupying certain parts of the British zone, was under Polish hands.

**Wilhelmshaven** was actually this was base of German – **Dönitz** submarines, **Wilhelmshaven**.

Q: Mm-hm, that's right, mm-hm.

A: And this was freed by the Poles. So they took care of us in a way, that we were part of the allied occupation forces of **Germany**.

Q: So there was no pressure to send you back.

A: Th – no, no pressure to send us back, because the pressure we simply defied in a way, that the free Poles, free armed forces were protecting us.

Q: Okay.

A: But among the Russians, among the Ukrainians, many suicides were committed because people didn't want to go back to their paradise, the Soviet paradise. There were – they were decisively against it, and they knew that, according to the Russian rule, whoever was taken prisoner, he was a ta – traitor – traitor.

Q: So these former **POWs**, former slave laborers of **Germany**, who had been – who had been captured by the Germans, didn't want to go back because they knew that they wouldn't – they wouldn't be treated as people who had suffered.

A: Repats, no, no.

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Q: No.

A: The – the Russians especially were afraid because the propaganda that they were fed, you know, that the west is inferior, west is so and so, and so and so, you know. Suddenly they were witnesses to something different. Many Ukrainians were hiding among the Polish **DP** camps. Many Russians were trying to falsify their papers to – not to be forced to return back. There was an agreement between, I think, **Roosevelt** and **Stalin** to return all the Russians prisoners of war back to their homeland.

Q: But you stayed. Did you try to find out what was happening in **Poland** with your family, with your mother and your sister? Were you able to write to them and find –

A: No, no, my mother and sister were they ro – in – in – with me through the whole time.

Q: Oh, I didn't realize this.

A: Yes, I –

Q: So they had come to **Lehrte** as well?

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: I see, I see. I see.

A: We were all together til the liberation, and then when finally I – I was – I went through a verification from the Polish government, to prove who I was, and so on. They immediately drafted me to the Polish armed forces.



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Q: Got it. Okay.

A: Okay? So this was 1947, when they moved us from **Fallingbostel**. We were demobilized in June, 21<sup>st</sup> of June, we were demobilized by the Poles, Polish officers from the first armored division, that finally we became civilians. But we wanted to continue our schooling. So the Camp **Fallingbostel** and schooling units were transferred to **Lehrte**, near **Diepholz**.

Q: Okay.

A: And that's where I went to [**indecipherable**] that's **Lyceum**.

Q: Right.

A: This is two years, where I got the matriculation, **matura**(ph).

Q: Okay, okay.

A: This was 1949. In '49, I returned back to **Fallingbostel**, where my mother, with this **DP** civilian camp was there. And returning back, I got job with the milita – Australian military mission, because they needed translators. My English was acceptable at that time, so I became an interpreter, followed my fa-father's –

Q: Father's footsteps, yeah.

A: And then I worked for the military mi – Australian military mission, recruiting different people to go to **Australia**.

Q: Did you ever have temptation to do so yourself?

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A: No, the consul that I worked, Mr. **Dalton**, he was a full Brit, I think, **Dalton**. He was from **India**, he came from **India**, because when the –

Q: Right.

A: – the Indian, let's say, under the British rule –

Q: Right.

A: – came to an end, they were all looking for work, so many of them found the jobs at – with **IRO**, International Refugee Organization, and the infamous **UNRRA**.

Q: **UNRRA**, yeah.

A: **UNRRA**. So this was – this was the case, that I was able to complete the **matura**(ph), and I got the work. In the meantime, working for the Australians, I talked to my, let's say superior, I said, Mr. **Dalton**, what do you think? Should I sign a two year contract and go down yonder, and chase the rabbits for the government for two years, or should I go to **U.S.A.**? He says, well, to **Australia** you can always go from **U.S.A.**, but better go where – where you have some relatives there, and I had my uncle in **Roebling, New Jersey**, and I went to the promised land.

Q: And did you go –

A: This was December – December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1950.

Q: Wow.

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A: I arrived to **New York** on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Q: With your mother and sister?

A: No, my sister died after – let's say, from exhaustion. She died in that camp.

Q: In **Fallingbostel**?

A: Not **Fallingbostel**, that –

Q: **Lehrte**?

A: **Lehrte**, yeah.

Q: When did she die?

A: This was – this was, let's see, when we were liberated in – in April, there was about two months – two months later, I think, she passed away.

Q: Oh, the poor thing.

A: She was exhausted, she – you know, that was – experiences that we had, some people were weak, you know, and couldn't – couldn't take it. So she died, and the only survivor of this whole tragedy was my mother. My father was executed in **Warsaw**.

Q: You knew this at the time?

A: Yeah. And we had many, many people that decided to return back to **Poland**, you know, about two, three months later they came back. Because **UNRRA** cars were traveling back and forth, you know, bringing the aids, bringing – some of the

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Polish families were smuggled from **Poland** to join their husbands, brothers and sisters in the Polish units, free Poles army, and the – in – in the British zone. So that was the havoc of the transition from war to peace.

Q: That's right. So, did your mother come with you to the –

A: Yes.

Q: She did.

A: She came over, and when we came, that was – I arrived to **New York**, my first donut was on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, from Salvation Army.

Q: The things one remembers.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we moved to new yo – to **Roebing**, and from **Roebing** after about year or so, we moved to **Chicago**.

Q: And you've been here since.

A: And it's – that's it, see, this is – this is the place.

Q: What a journey.

A: Hm?

Q: What a journey.

A: It was a long journey, yes.

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Q: Yes. And what a story.

A: Well, my – my kids are trying to convince me to write the memoirs, I don't know. Maybe if I get the inspiration and health. So far, so good, you know, I –

Q: Yeah.

A: – I'm 86, and still on the go. I even play tennis, twice –

Q: Not bad.

A: – twice a week.

Q: Not bad.

A: This is – I am laughing [**indecipherable**] says when we go play tennis, there are two ambulances waiting outside.

Q: Tell me, you got married here in **Chicago**?

A: Oh, this was a kidnapping of my wife. I met her – her cousin here. He was also in the Home Army, and he was in the underscore in **Italy**. Anyway, we started corresponding, you know, and then I figured when **Gomulka** opened the gates for **Poland** to allow the westerners to visit **Poland** – this was 1959, I took my friend here, **Henrik(ph)**, a native – a native Indian, an American. I said listen, come along with me. He says, oh, I will, I will, I will. I – I want to go. So both of us went, and we got married in **Poland**. He got married because I got married

Q: Well, there's a reason.

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A: Yeah. So I brought my better half here. She came about six months after – after me. And that's it, here we are.

Q: How many children do you have?

A: I have two, two daughters, **Eva** and **Margaret**, both speak Polish, and I am the tyrant father. Tyrant father because –

Q: Did you send them to Polish schools?

A: Yes, they went to Polish schools, and they completed their higher education, you know, one is – one is working for the Canadian bank – Bank of **Montreal**, **Eva**.

She's the vice president there. And she's happy, 18 years with that outfit. This is **BOM, b-o-m**, Bank of **Montreal**, here in the **United States**. And **Margie** open up her private business, gift baskets for any occasions, you know, like **[indecipherable]** she says, I want to work for myself, rather than for some other people. So she is business minded, and she is doing okay. The only tragic part is that I don't have any grandchildren.

Q: That can change.

A: Yes.

Q: That can change.

A: So this is – this is my life story in a nutshell.

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Q: Well, thank you. Thank you very, very much for sharing it. It is exactly what I wanted to hear and to learn about, and I very much appreciate it.

A: I thank you, because you were kind enough to get interested in that, even though it's a little bit later than it should be, because it's 50 years maybe late. But still, there are remains of the live ones, and we're still in vertical positions, we're moving. I keep a low profile, and I move fast, so that nobody can catch me – me again.

Q: Very good. Very good. You know, and with this, I will then say, I conclude the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Thaddeus Gubala**, on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in **Chicago, Illinois**. Thank you again.

A: I thank you for coming, and let's say, listening to my story.

Q: Very interesting. Very, very interesting, thanks again.

A: Thank you.

Q: Okay.

**Conclusion of Interview**