

## Translation of Oral History Interview with Juliusz Bogdan Deczkowski

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In his introduction, Juliusz Bogdan Deczkowski lists a pseudonym that sounds like “Leunainsky”. In this translation Juliusz will be referred to as J.

J. was born on April 20, 1924 in Bydgoszcz. A year later, his family moved to Warsaw. Since then he has lived in Warsaw. J. was the oldest child. His brother Stanisław was born a year later. His brother Zbigniew was born two years later. And his sister Barbara was born 5 years later. In Warsaw they lived near Kielecka Street in the Mokotów District of the city. His father worked as a driver/mechanic. At first he drove his own taxi. After it broke down, he started to work for the company of Dziejudzki & Lange. He didn't have a full time job and was on call 24/7 from the director of the company.

J. completed general school in 1937 and in 1938 he entered the gymnasium (middle school), named after Jerzycki, in Warsaw. However, since his father's income was small and tuition to middle school was high, J.'s brother Stanisław planned to help (with the tuition) by becoming a driver/mechanic like his father. In 1937, all three brothers joined the Union of Polish Boy Scouts. Their troop was named in honor of Żwirko and Wigura—two legendary Polish heroes in aviation in the early 1930's. Together, the three brothers attended jamborees, meetings and outings. There they met many friends. In 1939, when the war broke out and the Germans dissolved the Union of Polish Boy Scouts, as well as many other Polish institutions, J.'s troop started to operate conspiratorially.

J. managed to get into a trade school for gardening. He continued to meet with the Boy Scouts, who were by then meeting clandestinely. In those meetings they shared information that reached them. For example, they were very moved by the event known as Wawra, where in December 1939, the Germans summarily executed 107 Polish citizens, including Jews.

Later as clandestine Boy Scouts, they took steps against German propaganda. On May 9, 1941, J. was arrested together with his first cousin, Roman Romanowski and a classmate, Tadeusz Urbanski, while distributing leaflets. The text in the leaflet rhymed in Polish. The gist of its content was: “The pigs themselves are sitting in the movies”—what seems as a rather innocuous observation. But its intent was to cast aspersion on the veracity of German films that tried to glorify the feats of the Third Reich, while demeaning those who were waging war against them.

J. and his friends were appalled by the scenes on the streets that they witnessed as they related to treatment of the Jews by German soldiers. During the first days of occupation, they saw Jews being rounded up and forced to perform such thankless tasks as cleaning streets, while being forced to sing Polish songs, and being harassed in general.

On Kielecka Street, J. became acquainted with a Jew, who was a chemist and a banker from Lodz. He started coming by to occasionally buy some food from J.'s father, who by that time, having lost his job as a driver, bought a cart and a horse and started to make assorted deliveries around town, such as coal, furniture and food stuff. When once J. expressed some interest in chemistry, this gentleman started to teach J. chemistry free of charge. Nevertheless, J.'s father would try to give him some food for his tutoring of J.

Soon they were saddened to learn that as a Jew, this chemist needed to wear an armband in public. And soon, they had to part company with this chemist altogether, since under a new German edict; he was no longer allowed to visit them, because he had to confine himself to the ghetto.

J. proceeds to describe a poster that tried to separate and isolate Jews from Poles by depicting Jews as being responsible for the spread of typhus. But, back to J.'s arrest...

As the German policeman began to investigate what the three of them were doing in the entrance to the building, Tadeusz Urbanski shoved the German out of the way and started to run away in the direction of Savior Square. Instead of chasing after Tadeusz, the policeman took J. and Roman to the German police station. Once there, the policemen started to beat them with rifle butts and with their fists. Only after Roman started to bleed profusely from a hit in the nose, were they locked up in the bathroom. In that, the Germans made a basic mistake—failing to separate them. That allowed them to rehearse an alibi that they would use to explain what they were doing in the doorway of the building, when they were caught. It also allowed them to overhear that the officer who brought them in reported that the guy who got away, was strong and some 30 years old. That led to a reprimand from the head of the station for bringing in two kids and allowing the probable ring leader to get away.

They were kept locked up in the bathroom through the night. They were interrogated one more time and each one was given 25 lashes with a whip. The time spent in the WC also allowed them to flush some conspiratorial flyers that were left in their pockets. In the morning they were told to gather up all that they took out of their pockets, they were handcuffed and taken to "Szuch's Parade Grounds"—a pejorative name given to the prison cells that were created from partitioned tram cars.

For a half day, all that the Germans cared about was finding out about the person who got away. What was his name and where he lived? Throughout this interrogation J. and Roman

were beaten about the face. By the end of the day they were finally taken to the prison called Pawiak.

J. proceeds to describe the layout of Pawiak. First they were taken to the 7<sup>th</sup> Department, in the basement, for a quarantine period. The other half of the basement held Jews. They were held there the entire time, not just for a quarantine period. Above the 7<sup>th</sup> was the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Above the 8<sup>th</sup> was the 4<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. From the 7<sup>th</sup> Department J. was taken to the 6<sup>th</sup> Department. The major change from that was that J. was separated from Roman.

The big events that left a strong impression on J. were transports from Pawiak. Covered trucks arrived to pick up prisoners from cells. During that time, prisoners were not allowed to look out the windows. Inmates had a few seconds to say good-bye to one another. Often, these moments brought them to tears.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> Department J. met a Jew named Białek, who had just finished a bout with typhus. J. had no idea why Białek was arrested. He almost had no hair. He was with J. for nearly 2 weeks. What happened to him later, J. had no idea. That day, on May 28, J. saw from the window his friend, the director Sabawa Flora, run under the canopy of one of the transport trucks. He was arrested one day earlier than J. He was arrested from home. They met in Pawiak quite coincidentally. From him he learned that in their circle of friends there was a German stoolie, who allegedly, after the capitulation of France to Germany, began to collaborate with the Germans. This information made J. worry that Flora's case may be linked with his.

J. knew another person who was arrested on April 1, 1941 [name and position not decipherable, but may have been the Boys Scout troop leader]

J. shares his shock and concern about the outbreak of the war between the Soviet Union and Germany. However, they were able to deduce that this was a good turn of events and may improve the lot for the residents of Pawiak. Many inmates speculated about various scenarios as far as their fate was concerned.

J. reports on a German commission that came to Pawiak to conduct an evaluation of living conditions and treatment of the inmates. One outcome of this study was the creation of a separate department for those prisoners who were under the age of 18. Because of it, J. was reunited with Roman. They both assumed that their case was now closed and that they will be taken with an early transport to Oświęcim.

J. relates the different and often cruel and sadistic ways that the German guards treated the prisoners when they were allowed to go for walks in the prison courtyard.

Following the visit by the commission, J. was transferred to a work detail, as an assistant to the gardener. However, because some prisoners managed to escape from Pawiak, the work details were suspended and the prisoners were locked in their cells.

J.'s other friends worked in prison workshops. Thanks to help from one such friend, Kazik Cygański, J. managed to find work in the carpentry workshop. There they made furniture for the Germans. They also worked on refurbishing radios, since Poles were not allowed to have them. The German guards would often leave those radios in the cells, allowing the inmates to listen to various broadcasts on the condition that they tell them what they heard.

One floor above the carpentry workshop was a cell that held 50 inmates, including some Jews. There, J. met Broniesław Miodowski and Józef Miodowski. They sat opposite him at the table at lunch time. Lunch consisted of disgusting soup, while those working receiving an additional half portion of bread. Furthermore, those working were entitled to receive food packages from home. So, for J., Roman, Kazik, and Jacek Adamski, food-wise, they were doing well.

Once, they were approached by a Jewish tailor. At that time, Jews were allowed to come to from the ghetto and work in Pawiak. They came to sew uniforms and make shoes for the Germans. For that, they received a portion of soup and a piece of bread. If they received any other reward, J. did not know about it.

Once, one of the Jewish tailors, stopped to ask whether they (the prisoners) had any leftover bread. After checking with Kazik and Jacek, they agreed to part with some of their extra bread. At that time, the tailor told J. of the hunger that reigned in the ghetto; that there wasn't any food to be had. People were lying listless in the streets. He told them that Jews were confined in the ghetto to restrict their access to food.

During that time, J.'s mother had a food stand next to the ghetto, at Wołówka Market. There she sold hot soup and tea. He told the tailor about this. A little while later, the tailor came back with news that his brothers were going to school and his parents were doing well and that they send their regards. The tailor used his 10-year-old sister to contact J.'s parents.

When J. asked whether he could send something to his family, through him, the tailor agreed, but only if it was a verbal message. In that case, J. asked that in the next package, his parents send him either a broken pretzel or a box of spilled matches as a sign that they received his message. You can imagine J.'s delight when in his next package, that came just in time for Christmas; there was a broken pretzel and a box of spilled matches. It proved to be very special message from home.

In this department they had other opportunities to share information. He had opportunities to speak with Broniek and Józek Miodowski. They even had some amusing situations. On the table

that they shared there was a bust of Hitler made of clay, made by an inmate-sculptor, by the name of Wiśniewski. This bust had its face facing the door. This bust had a magical effect on the Gestapo. Upon entering this cell, they would raise their hand and salute "Heil Hitler!" But when this bust would crack, Wiśniewski would fix it. While doing that, he would address Hitler with obscenities which provoked unrestrained laughter. Even though this transpired in the prison and anyone could have heard this, J. and his fellow inmates had confidence in one another that no one would tattle on them.

J. tells that on Christmas, the inmates were able to listen in the large hall to a broadcast from London, on one of the radios that they refurbished in Pawiak's carpentry workshop. Listening to the program proved to be even more meaningful, since the Germans came by to check up on the place, to make sure that everything was in good order. They walked by the radio, that at that moment was covered by a blanket and made no issue. Still the solidarity of the inmates was such that no one told anyone on the outside that they listened to radio broadcasts in Pawiak.

In January or beginning of February, J. was taken with his brother to "Szuch's Parade Grounds." There they were interrogated by another Gestapo officer who wasn't really interested in them. He was actually more involved in talking in broken Polish, with someone in civilian clothes. Intermittently, he would dictate some information to a German typist. It seemed that the officer and the civilian were discussing some matters from the ghetto, having to do with furs and shipment of some fabric. J. and his brother were convinced that they were about to be deported to Oświęcim.

On February 14, 1942 was J. father's namesake day. In advance of it, J. was preparing a small gift for him in the carpentry shop. It was a small box with an engraving on a piece of copper: "In honor of your namesake day, for my dearest father. Bogdan. Pawiak. 14. II. 1942." However, J. did not have any means of getting this gift to his father. He couldn't send it with the Jewish tailor, because a group of prisoners had recently escaped from Pawiak across the roof and all inmates were kept in their cells and all workshops shut.

Suddenly, J. and his brother were called out, with their belongings, into the hallway. What followed were quick good-byes with prison friends, and requests from them to contact friends and family on the outside. J. and his brother were more of the opinion that they were about to be deported to Oświęcim. Instead, they were taken to the office where they were asked some questions that satisfied the German and they were escorted to the gate of the prison. There they were subjected to another search. They were fortunate that the search was conducted by a German they called Karolek—a guard who never mistreated them. This time, he looked at the gift that J. made for his father, returned it and issued them a release from Pawiak. J. spent in Pawiak from May 9, 1941 until February 16, 1942. From the prison J. and his brother went

home, where they were joyously greeted by their brothers. In the evening they were joined by J.'s parents and Roman's mother. That evening they celebrated his father's namesake day.

The following morning, J. ran to school. From a distance he saw his classmates—among them Tadeusz Urbański, who ran away, when he and Roman were arrested on May 9, 1941 [which J. gives here erroneously as August 6.] From that day forward, J. was once again a student at Rejtan School—an Obligatory Trade School. Having missed some 9 months of school, J. had to find out which class he was supposed to enter. The director of the school, Stanisław Ostrowski, ultimately went along with J.'s classmates' unanimous outcry that he should continue with them, despite of the missed work; subject to a later review.

J. told his family and friends what was going on in Pawiak and what he saw with his own eyes in the ghetto on his way home from Pawiak on 16 February, 1942. This experience was quite shocking, since it was wintertime: Children bundled up in some rags or old coats, sitting or lying on the sidewalks, emaciated by hunger and dirty. Some were totally motionless. What was shocking about this scene was that it was apparent that the Germans were implementing a policy of starvation, so that the inhabitants would die from a "natural" death. J. recalls that even when he was in Pawiak, the Jew Białek told him that a German let him know that from the ghetto there were only two ways out: one through the chimney of a crematorium; the other one through gates of the ghetto to the Kirkut [sp?], the Jewish cemetery.

The gate to the ghetto, near Okopowa Street, was directly opposite the entrance the Kirkut. Even after all these years, J. is still able to recall the starved bodies of the children and adults that he saw in the ghetto, on his way home from Pawiak.

After a brief period, J.'s school friends determined that no one was following him and that he could rejoin their "gray ranks" (a.k.a. the disbanded Boy Scouts), the same troop that was led then by Tadeusz Urbański.

After some 3 months, J. met Eugeniusz Kelher [sp?], J.'s troop leader, who after J.'s arrest also went into hiding and now he was recruiting a new troop. J. joined his troop as well. This was a third scout troop, under Janek Bednar Rudy. [N. B. This membership in three troops is confusing. LW]. They were tasked with a lot of conspiratorial work. Also, they had at their disposal many German language newspapers, so called Klawalterman [sp?]. It was a letter that they would clandestinely distribute in German barracks and in mailboxes in buildings inhabited by Germans. As of November 3, 1942 a new division was created in the "gray ranks," which became also subservient to a military organization, the Polish National Army (Armia Ludowa). However, only those who were 18 years old or older could belong to this troop.

[An inexplicable interruption occurred on the audio tape at time mark: 39:15] [LW]

On March 23, 1943, J. was called by his troop leader, who told him: "Immediately give me back my money." When asked: "Whose money?" He answered: "Those belonging to Rudy. You borrowed it from him this morning." This was a coded message that informed J. that the troop leader, Janek Bednar Rudy was arrested. That made it essential for them to determine who else might have been arrested. J. left his house with his brothers and after some phone calls they were able to figure out that no one else was arrested. In the course of the day, they were informed that that very day Janek Bednar Rudy was scheduled to be released by the Gestapo.

All his friends were mobilized. Everyone wanted to participate in this action. However, only instructors and troop leaders were chosen for this assignment. Everything was set and everyone was already at their assigned positions, since the action was supposed to take place as Janek Bednar Rudy and other prisoners were being transferred by a convoy from "Szuch's Parade Grounds"—the Gestapo HQ, to Pawiak—the prison. However, since the military authorities (Polish National Army), who were supposed to give the "green light" for this operation and didn't, and the only other person who could was out of town, the operation was postponed until March 26<sup>th</sup>. The "gray ranks" had their own spy in the Gestapo HQ who under the guise of being a vendor of chocolates, observed activities in the headquarters. He also had excellent German language skills. He informed the "gray ranks" that their friend Rudy was being transported.

That day, the German transport was attacked under the walls of the Warsaw Armory. The battle lasted some dozen minutes. All the prisoners were freed. The German escorts were either killed or wounded. Other German troops in the area were subjected to gun fire. Rudy was freed and taken to Mokotów [neighborhood of Warsaw]. He was in critical condition because during interrogation he was beaten and tortured. He died on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 1943. Also killed in this operation was Alek Davidowski, the leader of the first troop. He was wounded in the abdomen. Another casualty was a colleague, Tadeusz Krzyżewicz, fatally wounded by a "navy blue" policeman. And yet another colleague ended up being captured with a weapon, by the Germans. So, all of Warsaw talked about the 25 prisoners of Pawiak that were freed. But they did not know of the losses suffered by the "gray ranks," nor about the threat under which they all fell.

Soon thereafter, 2 members of the Gestapo, Lange and Schultz, who conducted the interrogation of Rudy and tortured him, were killed by the "gray ranks".

In April 1943 an uprising broke out in the ghetto. This turned out to be a large-scale battle in the ghetto. J. observed these developments when he would visit his parents on the Wołówka Market. The situation was becoming quite grim even days before the full uprising erupted. The

Germans would routinely fire into the windows of buildings as if it was a game. But this was not limited to the Germans. Their collaborators, the Letts, and the Ukrainians who guarded the buildings, also joined in the game. As soon as they would spot a Jew in the window, they'd take a shot. Gradually, those windows that became shooting targets were being bricked in. After the uprising really got started, inside those buildings, terrible fires would break out. Those fires could be observed from great distances. During that time, J. visited a few suburbs of Warsaw and observed how the wind and the hot air would carry burning pages with Hebrew letters on them to those distant suburbs.

Another new situation was observed by J. and his parents. The Germans started to shoot indiscriminately at ghetto children. The situation was hopeless, since the (Russian) front was still very far away. The residents of the ghetto were not getting any help. From a military point of view, it was evident that these people were doomed. By the way, the ghetto uprising served as a precursor to the later Warsaw Uprising, when the Poles, who were better armed than the Jews in the ghetto, and the Russian front quite near, and yet the Germans still managed to totally destroy Warsaw.

Nonetheless, some units of the Polish National Army helped the fighters of the ghetto. They gave them concussion grenades, "Molotov" cocktails, ammunition and guns. However, these weapons were very weak in comparison to those of the Germans. They had tanks, cannons and were well provisioned. Watching the ghetto uprising, J. and his circle of friends assumed that the Germans would first exterminate the Jews, then the Gypsies and gradually they would turn to killing Poles.

If one were to consider that more than 100,000 people managed to get through Pawiak during the period of German occupation, 37,000 of those were killed by the Germans. Those killings took place as public executions, or as executions of hostages avenging the killings of Germans. In some of those cases 100 hostages would be executed for the death of 1 German. Sometimes these executions would not be public. People would be taken to nearby forests and there they would be "quietly" killed. In this way, no one would suspect that Pawiak prisoners were being executed. Later, when the residents of the ghetto were exterminated, prisoners from Pawiak would be executed on the grounds of the vacant ghetto. This news was shocking for the Polish residents of Warsaw. Information about these happenings were disseminated by the conspiratorial press and by slogans painted on walls, such as: "We will avenge Pawiak!" In addition to the 37,000 killed in Pawiak, 60,000 were transported to concentration camps.

Now J. chooses to go back to discussing how the ghetto was helped in getting food supplies. Jews confined to the ghetto were not allowed to leave it. Their rations were very small and they lived in very crowded conditions. Starvation was rampant. It was clear that some sort of relief



had to be organized. There would have to be numerous methods to accomplish this. The main initiative in this effort was taken up by many merchants, while risking their own life.

At first, for example, trams would cross the terrain of the ghetto, but no one was allowed to get off. So, these merchants would load onto the tram sacs with food provisions—grits, flour, sugar—and at agreed spots, they would throw them out of the trams. The Jews in the ghetto would collect these sacs and flee with them. This was set up so that even though the tram would not stop and sometimes the sacs ripped open in the process, the system worked. J. recounts that in his presence, when he travelled on this tram he witnessed how this was done. And, if the Germans saw this, those involved were running the risk of arrest, Pawiak, concentration camp or summary execution.

Also, food was brought in by various methods through holes beneath walls. And most of this ferrying was done by little children, 8 to 12 years old, boys and girls. They would come with small bags and backpacks and they would come over to the Aryan side of Warsaw to beg, in order to bring back some food.

J. explained why these children would do this, given the risk that it entailed. He was reminded of a conversation that he had with the Jew who used to come to work in Pawiak, and whose 10-year old sister risked going out of the ghetto and who made contact with his parents. When J. asked him why he would let her take such a chance, given that she could have been shot? He answered: "What's the difference whether you're shot or whether you'll die of hunger? This way, if you are able to bring back some food, you might be able to survive somehow." It was easier for kids to get from the Jewish side to the, so called, Aryan side.

Later, when the ghetto uprising was suppressed by the Germans, the survivors were deported to extermination camps and the Germans started to destroy the houses that remained standing. J. became aware of this later, at the start of the Warsaw Uprising on August 1, 1944.

On that day, J. was on Okopowa Street, by the gate to the Ghetto. On the other side was the Jewish cemetery. It was there that the Platoon Alec, Company Rudy, Battalion Zośka, started the Warsaw Uprising. On the first day, they attacked the bunker that was near the gate. It was hit by an anti-tank shell. At that moment the commander of J.'s platoon jumped into the bunker and pulled out by his lapels, an SS officer-- the deputy of Gęsiówka. He was only suffering from shellshock and was taken as prisoner. It was from him that the insurgents learned that there were Jewish prisoners held in the Gęsiówka Prison. There was a problem at that point with the attack. The rebels were unable to take control of the entire Gęsiówka at once. They first attacked the bunkers and watchtowers from the side of Okopowa Street. Those were captured. Also, a large part of the territory of the Ghetto fell under the control of the rebels. After a detailed reconnaissance, two German Panther tanks were captured by the rebels. Both were

made operational and in fact one was used in the attack that was launched on August 5th. J. recalls that very moment because he and his unit were given the task of pushing towards Pawiak, in the direction of the Church of the Holy Augustin, to serve as a screen, while the main attack moved in the direction of Gęsiówka with the assistance of the Panther tank. Seeing the tank with a turret painted red and white, and soldiers in German tanker uniforms, but with red and white on their helmets and on their sleeves, a shout of: "Hurrah!", rose up from the ranks of the insurgents. The cheering continued as the rebels moved forward in waves. Shells from the tank struck the German bunkers and watchtowers and the rebels broke inside the prison territory.

At that point, J. was somewhat to the side and observed a terrain crisscrossed by canyon-like piles of debris, without a solitary intact building. Instead of streets there was a small path. And along this path, in the direction of Pawiak, one could see German SS-men fleeing Gęsiówka. The rebels had two machineguns directed at them. J. instructed colleagues not to fire on the Germans until they were closer. And at the point that they started to jump across to the side of Pawiak, the rebels opened fire. The scene looked as if a huge log fell in the midst of the fleeing Germans and sent them flying in all directions. However, it soon became evident that the insurgents lacked battle experience. And that the well trained Germans were regrouping and starting to fire on the rebels' position.

Furthermore, nearby, in the Hospital of St. Zofia, in a large red building, there was a group of German soldiers. From there the rebels were also receiving gunfire. Now the rebels were being fired at from two sides. At that point the captured German tank repositioned itself closer to the rebels, and fired a few shells into the hospital. That forced the Germans to go into hiding, giving the rebels a chance to withdraw.

In his continuing description of the Warsaw Uprising, J. reports that earlier on, Zosia Karasowska, a liaison-nurse from their battalion, was gravely wounded and subsequently died. J.'s brother was wounded in the foot. Another colleague was wounded in the attack on Gęsiówka. And Juliusz Rubinin was wounded in his liver and also died as a result of this wound.

For J., the most traumatic experience during the fight for Gęsiówka took place upon entering Gęsiówka and seeing an enormous group of Jews, speaking in various languages. Among them, J. recognized Broniek Miodwski, with whom J. spent time in Pawiak. They had a joyous reunion. When they met, Broniek let J. know that Józek was also alive. Soon thereafter, Józek joined their reunion. Around them, people spoke in all sorts of languages: Hungarian, French; as if in the Tower of Babel.

It turned out that the insurgents freed 348 prisoners, from various countries of Europe that fell under German occupation. And to think that they were liberated by the Boys Scout Battalion Zośka of the Polish National Army, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 1944.

After the war, J. met Broniek again. All the Jews who were liberated were free to do as they wished. Some of them joined J.'s unit. Some joined the unit called Parasol (Umbrella). The greatest number joined the unit of Lt. Fid [Sic.], because there was a shortage of arms. And these new recruits helped, for example, with the delivery of food supplies from Stawki [district of Warsaw] where there were huge German depots that were captured by the rebels—to Stare Miasto (Old Town) [district of Warsaw]. And that proved to be the reason why the Stare Miasto was able to put up its resistance for as long as it did.

J. also remembered that these Jewish recruits were also with the rebel units in Czerniaków [district of Warsaw], when J.'s unit fought its way from Wola [district of Warsaw], across Stare Miasto, broke through Śródmieście (Midtown) [district of Warsaw], and reached Czerniaków. In Czerniaków, there were units working at night. Among them was Staszek Strzałkowski, who was in Gęsiówka and Pawiak Prisons and whom J. saw after the war. And a few others, who were still wearing prison clothes in Czerniaków, even though it was already September. Some of them changed their clothing right away. Broniek with his brother, for example, made it to the Franciscan monks. They were wounded during the uprising. However, the monks took care of them. And until this day they are alive. Broniek lives in Paris. His name is Bernard Miodon and is a tailor. He visits J. and last year he visited with his wife Dora.

[At time stamp 60:00, Juliusz is holding up a postcard] J. says that this is a memento which survived the war. It is a letter that J. wrote on December 1, 1941, to his family [with Christmas wishes], but in German. [Juliusz proceeds to read it in German.] J. remembers this letter because he used to receive various packages from home and he shared their contents with those prisoners that did not receive packages from home, especially those who were in solitary cells, and with their Polish guards who were very kind to them.

In the evening of September 20, 1944, J. jumped from the sinking ship “Bajka” into the Vistula River and swam to the other side. There, J. received from the Polish People’s (Ludowa) Army clothing, since he swam completely naked, and he was warned not to admit that he was in the National (Krajowa) Army. J. was brought to Zielonka, not too far from Warsaw, to Major Domeracki, who told him that if he had family nearby, he should go to them to rest and afterwards to report to the Polish People’s Army.

J. reported to the People’s Army in Lublin. From there he was taken to Majdanek—an extermination camp. In November, 1944, the 7<sup>th</sup> Reserve Regiment of the Polish People’s Army was based there. J. was confined to the same barracks and slept on the same straw mattresses

on which Germans kept prisoners earlier. J.'s worst days were those in Majdanek because he became infested with lice. This was an awful experience for J. These were such lice that he was busy with them all day. Those soldiers who were there (and J. refers to them as soldiers in quotation marks) were primarily marauders, soldiers freed from hospitals, soldiers who went AWOL from the army, castaways and those who were forcefully inducted into the army.

Earlier, J. was a volunteer. For his service in battles, during occupation and during the uprising (in Warsaw) he didn't receive any pay. Meanwhile, in Majdanek he suddenly found himself in the midst of those who wanted to be as far away from the front as possible. What was most macabre in Majdanek for him and remains so until the present day was seeing the crematoria and mounds of human bones and ashes; and adjacent, an experimental field of cabbage, whose heads were sprinkled with those very human ashes; the piles of human belongings of prisoners who at one time were there.

There wasn't any rigor for J. while he was in Majdanek. From time to time, some merchants came by; primarily dressed in Polish uniforms, but they spoke Russian. One day such a merchant came by, but he didn't want anybody for the infantry or mechanized units, instead, he was looking for draftsman. J. volunteered. The test was brief. J. was asked what was  $a + b^2$ ? J. answered promptly and everything was fine. And at that point J. was taken to the 9<sup>th</sup> Independent Repair Battalion of Track Vehicles in Lublin. His name was Captain Giktyatev. He was Russian and he was the commander of this battalion. His deputy was Lieutenant. Zawiało, also Russian and a second deputy, Lt. Bautagan, also Russian. The only person whom J. did not like was the Lieutenant for Political Instruction, who was Polish and he was promoting Stalinist propaganda. For example, he said that those who rose up in Warsaw stood with weapons at their feet and waited for the Polish People's Army to come and liberate them.

J. was afraid to contradict this, because he knew that if he got into a discussion with him, in a day or two he would be arrested and deported to Siberia. Suffice it to say that no one else spoke. Everyone just listened to the Lieutenant for Political Instruction.

After Warsaw was taken by the Russian, J. filed a request for a two-day pass. He wasn't doing anything in Lublin anyway. He had no drafting tools. He was a plain private. He never admitted that, before the uprising, he was a platoon officer and that he took part in battles with Germans. Admitting to that was very dangerous. Three times he filed the request and each time he was denied. On January 17, 1945, the Russian and Polish troops entered Warsaw. On January 23, around 4:00 a.m., J. left the barracks and hitched a ride in a car headed for Warsaw. He learned that the driver was headed for the Prague district of Warsaw. He remembers that that day was exceptionally cold and that he could cross the Vistula on foot. On the shore where earlier fighting took place in the area of Czerniaków, bodies of some fallen soldiers and civilians could still be seen lying where they fell.

From Czerniaków, J. walked on foot to Mokotów. Along the way, he did not meet a soul. The city was totally deserted. Near Puławska Street, when he saw the house in which he lived, on Usnowska Street, he started to run. In the park nearby, he noticed a provisional cemetery for those who died during the uprising. He took control of himself and went higher where he saw that their apartment, on the second floor, had fallen one floor, together with the roof, as did the kitchen and both rooms. Only the foyer remained. On the street there was a bomb crater. In the garden there was another bomb crater. A tree that was there was ripped out with its roots and was tossed quite far away. On the other side, on Odyńca Street, where there were 3 or 4 storied buildings, there were piles of rubble. All around there was total silence. Not a living soul to be seen.

J. was at a loss as to what to do. He thought of going towards the cross. Perhaps his mother or his grandmother was buried there. Suddenly, he saw a woman wrapped in a scarf, heading his way. As he approached to ask her, she shouted out: -“Bogdan!” It turned out to be his aunt, the first person whom he met in Warsaw on January 23, 1945. Almost in one breath, she let him know that his parents are in the suburbs near Warsaw, and that they’ll be back in the evening; that his brother and sister are alive. And that his grandmothers are also alive. So, fortunately for their family, they survived.

J.’s brother took part in the Warsaw uprising, in the battle for Okęcie Airport, and survived. His father fought in the Uprising in Śródmieście/Midtown, and survived. J.’s grandmothers, his mother her sisters were at home when the bombs fell. One fell in front of the building and the other one fell behind the building. Both missed the building.

In the evening the family had a warm get-together. When J.’s father asked him what he plans to do now, J. answered that he did not know. However, when his father noticed J.’s military hat—the only military garment that he was ever issued, given that he came home in civilian clothes, a spring coat with a black lamb collar—he grabbed his hat and threw it into the lit stove. J. mentions here that the entire family lived in a very small room of some 12 m<sup>2</sup>. At that time, in Warsaw, there was no water, no electricity, no gas, no communication, and no stores. These were the conditions under which they started life after the war.

Soon, J. reported to RKU (Rajonowa Komenda Uzupelnienia) [Regional Headquarters of Supplemental Resources], under the name of Stanisław—that of his deceased brother, who died in the Uprising. Under that name J. completed secondary school and after passing an exam, was admitted to the Warsaw University in the department of mathematico-physical-chemistry. J. studied until 1949. In the meantime J. had a lot of responsibilities, since he had to notify family members of the circumstance under which their sons or daughters had died in the Uprising. He was also responsible for exhuming the bodies of the deceased, since in his battalion, 80% of his male and female friends had died. Some of their bodies were lying

unburied, in places where they fell in battle. Exhumation of bodies was a very difficult task. Bodies or remains had to be transferred to a military cemetery, the same one, where since 1943, J. attended the funeral of Rudy, and colleagues who died in diversionary actions.

J. was arrested on January 14, 1949, totally unexpectedly. At the time J. was getting ready for exams. At the time of his arrest, he was at a friend's house with whom he was getting ready for taking the exams. He came home in the morning, only to find two unfamiliar men with insignia of the Parasol [Umbrella] Battalion in their lapels, pistols in their hands and who behaved strangely. First they searched J. J. could see that the apartment was searched and everything was strewn about. They proceeded to show him the arrest order. He was told that he was being detained only to clarify something and that most likely he would return.

Earlier that day, J.'s youngest brother Zbigniew was arrested, even though they did not have an arrest order for him. His brother stayed in prison a half year. He was released without a court trial. J was imprisoned on Rakowiecka Street in the 10<sup>th</sup> wing. The investigation was very unpleasant. He was being accused of belonging to an illegal organization seeking primarily to overthrow the government of the People's Republic of Poland. Meanwhile, during the court trial, which took place in his cell, J. was met by Maj. Vidaj, two jurors and a civilian, sitting at a table. After answering all personal questions that he was asked, J. was informed that a court trial would take place in a military court and the civilian in the cell was in fact his lawyer. The court was briefly adjourned, after J. was given permission by Maj. Vidaj to briefly consult with his lawyer in the corridor.

J. stated that he didn't feel completely guilty since he didn't belong to any organization. J. reports another interesting detail from the trial. Maj. Vidaj asked whether J. had any other questions. J, answered: "If I am being accused of belonging to an illegal organization, then who were my superiors and who were my subordinates?" Maj. Vidaj's answered: "You are not the one to ask questions." J. was sentenced to 5 years in prison. The highest military court approved the verdict and eventually, J. was sent to the prison in Wronki and then to Kamieniołomów (Rock quarry) in Piechcin. J. spent 50+ months in prison.

After getting out of prison, J. faced many problems. He was not allowed to continue his studies. The professors were in favor as was the dean, but the Communist Youth Organization did not agree that someone like J. could study with them. In light of that, J. found physical work in his trade as a chemist. After a while J. went with see Minister Rapacki-- Minister of Higher Education. The Minister received him and saw no reason why J. could not return to his studies at the university. And thanks to Minister Rapacki's intervention, J. was able to complete his studies.