

Mr. Obuchowski, reel six.

Yes, as I mentioned, not so many years ago, the street that I live in, Carlisle Avenue. The National Front was holding a meeting. And the place was the school, Ilford County High for Boys. And the most frightening thing to me was, when I saw these windows, shop windows and people's windows, being boarded up, as if it was going to happen again, like it happened in Nazi Germany. And that's what really frightened me. And things are going on like this.

And when we speak about, there should be more care for people, regardless what nationality or creed, it's a little bit upsetting when you hear and see these people still against or trying to carry on with the terrible crimes that the Germans left off. Whether it could happen here or not, that's another story. I mean that, we don't know. But in Germany, it started off with a spark and nearly conquered the world.

Could I ask you about organization amongst the prisoners. Was there any form of organization that you came into contact with?

Not myself, personally. I heard that there was certain organizations in the camp. But I had nothing to do with none of this. Maybe because I was one of the younger ones or maybe because I was too much interested in food and how to survive the day. But to that question, I can't really give an answer. Because I don't know.

You never came across any committees?

No. No. No.

Did the prisoners always team up in pairs to help each other?

Not really. Not really. There were some that, if, for supposition, you knew somebody from your town or from the district that you lived, maybe. But it wouldn't be for the reason that they should defend themselves or they should try and get food or anything like that. That wouldn't be the reason. Because I mean there was no way of doing that.

You mentioned that time, when the chap proposed to you that you should escape, when you were at the railway station.

Yes.

Was that the only time that you considered escaping or the question of escape was put to you?

Yes, that was the only. That was the only time that the opportunity had arisen that we had. We had nobody around us. Or we had nobody to sort of do anything to us. But as I mentioned before, where could we have gone? Who would help us?

Now, the guards, can you tell me about the behavior of the guards? Were they unnecessarily brutal? Or was their bad behavior, towards you, because of the orders that they were receiving?

Well, when we're talking about the last, the end of the war, towards the end of the war, when we were marching on that death march, from Rehmsdorf to Theresienstadt, no. I would say those guards were given the order, if one lies down or if one stops walking, he should be shot. That was the orders. I should imagine it was given.

But as for a brutality, on that particular march, that was not necessary. They, themselves, had to march the same as we did. And they, themselves, didn't have a great deal of food, themselves. So I mean, they had their own problems on that particular march.

But if you're referring to other camps or in the camps that we were, the guards took pleasure and pride and thrived on torturing us and hitting us and knocking us about. And there was no need for any excuse to do that to us. They became so sadistic towards us that one human being, in normal circumstances, would not believe that it's possible for one human

being to do things to another human being like this. You see?

So yes, they were absolutely thriving on hurting us and giving us injuries and torturing us. So that was it. But on the last one, I suppose they were just as fed up, I suppose, as we were. Because, I mean, they had to do the job. And they had to make sure that they do the job properly. I mean, if somebody sits down or lies down, there was no question. They had to kill you. That's it.

Did you ever see any prisoner retaliate against a guard?

No. At no time, because the reason I gave you was, if you harmed one, 100 or maybe even, I would go and say, 1,000 would be wiped out. And there would be a lot of feeling amongst ourselves, why did you do this? You knew you couldn't win. You knew you couldn't gain nothing by it. It would be simply a satisfaction to yourself to harm one German and to kill 1,000 inmates. And that would be it, you see?

So I mean, that is the whole thing about this terrible thing. That even if we had opportunities to harm one, we wouldn't be able to, because we knew the consequences would be that 1,000 of us, most probably, would be wiped out.

I started off telling the story, on the first tape, about my little town, Ozorkow. The day that they were taking us to the ghetto, they didn't have no reason at all to gather seven people, put them in the square, and hang these seven people, in front of us all, for no reason. They didn't even have to say anything. They just took seven people and hung them up, strung them up in front of us.

So I mean, if there was a tough man or a tough guy amongst the town people, when the Germans came in, and he wanted to do something to defend himself or to defend any of us, it would have finished up in a terrible row amongst ourselves. Because as I said, he most probably would have killed one German or maybe 10 Germans. And the whole town would have been wiped out.

So there was no way, for us, of taking up arms. Or how did we go to the slaughter with our eyes wide open? And the questions that are put to me sometimes when I go and give a talk to the young people in schools or in houses. They come out with the same question. How could six million people go to the slaughter without raising a hand?

But the answer is simple. Because the Germans were armed. The Germans were powerful. And when we referring to the place, Auschwitz, when we went into the gas chambers, with our eyes open, and we didn't even raise a finger to try and defend ourselves, we were already starved for four years. It's like seeing skeletons walking to fight the mighty German Army, which is impossible.

Were these seven people executed for nothing, just at random?

Just took seven people and took them in the middle of the square, in front of the whole Jewish population, and just hung them up. They didn't have to give you no reasons, you see?

But now, 40 years later or 36 years later, when I went to Poland, with a friend of mine and our two wives, we went to Poland. And we met somebody from the Jewish organization in Łódź. We invited them to supper one evening. And they asked me the question, what did you come back here for?

And I said, I wanted to see maybe there's a trace of my sister in Auschwitz or maybe my parents. I wanted to go to Auschwitz to say a prayer for my parents. So that man says, well, if you went to Auschwitz with your sister-- your sister?

Yes.

But your parents never went to Auschwitz. They went to Chelmno. Of course, automatically, I made arrangements, right away, to go to Chelmno, to see the place, and to say a prayer for them. And to my astonishment, wherever I went, there was no sign that here, in Auschwitz, there was so many Jewish massacred by the Germans. Nothing. Nowhere is written

anything. Nothing. Nothing is written about the Jews.

But when I went to Chelmno, they've got like tombstones, in the form of tombstones, written in quite a few different languages. And in English, it translates, here, in Chelmno were 360,000 Jews massacred by the Germans. That's the only place, 360,000. And also, Martin Gilbert states the same thing in this book, see. I should imagine they took the figures from the same place as I took. But they got a monument there.

And I would like to go back again-- well, certainly not for holidays. But I would like to go to Auschwitz and say another prayer for my sister and also go to Chelmno and make a prayer for my parents, for my sister and my grandfather.

This was my grandfather. I had a photograph. My auntie, that lives in America, in Detroit, Michigan, she had photographs from my family when she went, emigrated to America, before I was born. And when they found out that I'm alive-- that's my mother's sister-- when she found out I was alive, she sent me certain little photos. And I have got a photo of my sister, as well.

Those seven executions, that you saw, in your hometown, was that the only time you saw executions?

Well, I saw many, many executions. But I thought that one, in my town, was the first one that I've seen.

What were the other executions for?

Well, in the camps, somebody done something out of the ordinary, something which the Germans saw you do, which it wasn't quite right, they executed you. They shot. I saw many, many people being shot. I didn't see many hangings. But I certainly saw very, very many people being shot.

And as I said, in the last thing about the camp that I was walking from, Rehmsdorf to Theresienstadt, I mean, there was over 2,000 people being shot. So I mean, I saw enough executions. And that is an execution, a mass execution. But not so many hangings, although it was going on all over the place.

Were there ever any instances of good behavior on the part of guards?

I can't remember any at all, none. Maybe there was, but I certainly didn't see none. I, on the other hand, I did see a lot of brutality, unnecessary brutality, where they took pride in it. You could see on their faces that they took-- it was so much pleasure to them by beating somebody up for no reason at all.

I think there's just one thing you would like to say finally.

Yes. Which would be I went-- from Windermere, I went to Gateshead, as I said before the tape, to gain a little bit of educational knowledge, which I lost during the war years. I was certainly not sorry for that, because the people in that town were absolutely fantastic towards us. They made human beings out of us. Although, it started off, at Windermere, when we came over, they had a hell of a job with us. Because, I mean, firstly we were so wild. Secondly, we had no idea about education or anything. And they tried their best. And they really helped us.

But when I went to Gateshead, there was even greater help. The people there, they didn't mind what they were doing for us. And they-- you could see the pleasure on their face when they'd done something good for us. So therefore, I would say that I'm grateful, for the people in Gateshead, for giving me my new start, as well as in Windermere.

But then when I came to London, I started work. And I found life nice. But I was about the loneliest person on this Earth, because I didn't have nobody around me. And very rarely though, I went to synagogue. And when we came out, everybody met their families or they kissed their nearest and dearest. And I stood there like a stone, because I was on my own.

I was looking for ways of getting out of that sort of situation. And I met some people that introduced me to my wife. And we got married. And my problems became less and less.

I married well. And my wife really helped me a great deal to become a good human being. We built a new family. I've got a daughter, which is married, with two children. And my son got married about a year ago. And he's also starting a family. So my life is really fulfilled. And I'm a happy man.