

Session number 8838, reel number 1. Mr. Bogacki, reel one. Where were you born, Mr. Bogacki?

I was born not far from Poznan, in the western part of Poland, not far from the German border. I really was born, at that time, under the German occupation because Poland was divided before the First World War into three parts. And I belonged to the German part. Do you want the date as well?

Yes, please.

I was born the 28th of July, 1908.

What did your father do for a living?

My father was a headmaster of a-- school headmaster.

And did your mother work?

No. I don't think at that time the wives worked at all. This was just an old medieval time still kind of family.

Did you come from a small family or a large family?

I have two brothers and one sister, four of us.

And are you the eldest?

I'm the eldest one. Yes.

Where did you go to school?

I started my school in Poznan. And 1925, I joined the cadet school, military cadet school, where I finished my general education and then joined-- it was transferred to the military officers school from there.

Had you had a Polish-language or a German-language education?

No, I had a Polish one. I started in the German one, really, in 1918-- '17, really. I was in the primary school as a young boy about 9, 10, or something. I started German. And then 1918, when Poland gained independence, of course, I had to go into the Polish-language school, which was quite difficult for me at that time, because I was brought up with German. Although, I was bilingual at that time, but still it was a certain problem for a young boy.

Anyway, after a few years I joined the cadet school, which lasted about five years.

Which school?

Cadet school. A so-called cadet school, which was a preparatory to the military profession or something like that, from where you could go straight into the military officer's school and be commissioned.

Before we talk about that, could I ask you if you have any memories about what it was like for Polish people to live in a part of the German Empire?

Well, I can't really say much from my experience. I was a young boy. The First World War broke out in 1914. I was about, what, seven-- six, seven? So of course, I remember the beginning. I remember the soldiers marching to the front with this music and so on. But that's all I can remember, really, and the war pictures from the western part, from Verdun or what-- anyway.

I know that the living was rather hard at that time. Food was difficult to get. And from that point of view, I remember that. To, say, get something to repair-- I even repaired shoes for myself at that time because it was difficult to get the leather-- these little things, which are in my memory. Otherwise, no special things because we were quite far from the front line.

Were you actually hungry? Did you go hungry?

I wouldn't say that. No, I wouldn't say that. The mother always provided something. My father was, of course, taken into the German army in 1914 and was killed in 1915 on the Eastern Front with Russia. So since that-- I remember my father, probably I'm the only one from my brother and sister. I remember him quite clearly.

And then my mother was the widow till the last days. She never remarried. She had to bring up-- the youngest one was my sister, born 1914, just a year after my father was killed. So my mother had four of us, where I was the eldest from probably-- in 1920, I was 12, and she was only six. So it was quite a problem for her to bring us up. But she succeeded I think.

Do you know if the Poles in Germany during the First World War wanted Germany to win the war or not?

Well, I don't know really, from my memory. I know that in my family, all my uncles were taken into the army and served their part in the Western Front. What their opinion, I couldn't at that age really recollect. I've hardly seen them at that time because they were fighting somewhere.

I don't know. Probably there must have been some kind because all those uncles, they were born in the 19th century. They were born under the German Kaiser. So you are brought up in a certain surrounding. Probably they must have some kind. Although they were Poles, and they certainly joined, later on, the Polish official whatever they are-- duties, but I think they must have been fought with some kind of-- I don't know. It's difficult to say what they thought, really.

As a schoolboy, did you have--

It's probably-- if I-- sorry. If I may just say, for instance here, Polish-born here, if a war broke out, they were taken as British citizens here. They were brought out here. And Poland for them is their mother language for their fathers. But they've never been, never seen it before. Probably they will have more British patriotism in their blood than they have Polish one, although the Poles might be on their side. They would be at, now, at the moment, on the other side. So it's probably the same thing that could have happened in the minds of those born in the 19th century.

As a schoolboy, did you have any wishes about who should win the First World War?

No. I can't recollect any special-- no, I can't say anything about it.

Now, can we go on to cadet school? And can you tell me why you decided to make a career of the army?

Why? Well, young boys, all they want to be train drivers, or they want to be something like that. I wanted to be-- join-- probably the friend of mine, we were in the same class, gymnasium. And he told me, let's go to the cadet school. What do you think about that? And he joined it the year before me. So I joined him the year after.

This was just things which appealed to me. It's probably that, the only thing. I liked a certain discipline, a certain regime. I always enjoyed it in the whole time. I never had any problems in that time, when I was brought up in the military system.

So going to a cadet school meant you were training to be an officer, did it?

Yes. I had to right after the cadet school-- I had the choice still, after five years, where I gained my matriculation, gymnasium-- you know, there was a different system of schooling. It's probably like your A-levels here or something like that. One had the choice to join the army, to go straight under the officer's, cadet officer's school, or opt out and go

to a civilian life, to university or something, because we could go straight to university out of that school.

And majority-- very few opted out, only those who didn't like the discipline, the regime, the rigor. And they opted out and went to civilian life, whatever they were, mostly to universities. And we went to the officer's school. And I chose-- we had the choice also of the kind of school we wanted to. So I joined the so-called Polish-- how to translate that school is Polish officer's engineers school, where there were two faculties, sappers and signals. And I joined the signals.

Was it easy to get into the cadet school?

At that time, it was very difficult. There was a fantastic trend for youngsters to apply for that. I don't know why. For instance, there were only 100 or 100 in my company. There was 120 of us. And I have been taught about there were nearly 1,000 applications. So you had to have-- go through a certain exams, selection, which luckily I passed somehow.

Why did you want to go into the signals?

It's a good question. Yes, I'll tell you why. I had a quite distinct idea. I thought-- I could have gone to the infantry. But I thought, when I go to the signals, I gain a certain profession, a certain skill. This was my idea in the back of my head.

What kind of social background were the people in the cadet school? Were they from rich and poor or not?

Very varied. Very varied-- from really affluent people, who usually opt out in the end because they were just-- they could afford everything-- and to quite poor people, who just went there. I think the average is just middle class, as far as I could-- because I wouldn't know everybody's background there, but I think average was middle class, probably lower middle class.

What was the discipline like at the cadet school?

Very strong. Very strong, indeed. Mind you, this was 1925 when I joined it. The war ended in 1918, so only seven years. The officers in charge of us were all First World War soldiers and very disciplinarian. The drill was fantastic for us. Of course, we were youngsters, so I personally enjoyed it-- very strong indeed.

For the first year, I wouldn't allowed, except for holidays like Easter or Christmas, Easter, and the final summer holiday-- I wouldn't be allowed for a weekend out, only by special permissions or request-- so strict. And we always kept, of course, sport, these kind of things. And education and learning was quite a lot.

So this was quite a strict discipline. It's like a monastery, I must tell you. You understand?

What punishments would you have?

Punishments at that time-- well, you just had to report with your rifle. And mind you, that part of the country was very dry and sandy. And they ask you, with the rifle on the field, and go through a certain drill and exercise. Say, after half an hour, my word, you were all through wet-- just as a punishment.

Or I remember quite clearly-- this sounds properly ridiculous, but in the beginning, when we were transferred to this-- was a new school. There were three cadet schools in Poland. And I went to the number three, which was just opened in 1925. And we were located in some barracks, not far from Poznan, on the German border. And there were no beds even for the first few weeks. We were lying on the straw, bare straw on the floor.

The drill was unbelievable. For us, this was sport, of course. We were all 12, 15, 13 something. The age differed very much. Ahem. Sorry.

And when we were not behaving properly, lunchtime we had our small-- I don't know how-- food in the military. I don't know how they call this in English-- cups, with which we would go to the kitchen, and they just pour you something in there.

So from the barracks, about 100 meters to the kitchen, we were all on our tummy on elbows and feet and here holding that and going like that to the kitchen.

Crawling.

Crawling. Because somebody was not up to scratch in the company. So this was something in the beginning. From many years back-- it's about how many? 60-something years back. So now I look at it with a certain-- not regret, but with a certain-- even pleasure, I must say.

Was the discipline accepted or resented?

I think it was accepted, because everybody, as I told you in the beginning, there was only 120 places and competed about 1,000 people for it. So if somebody was accepted and tried to get into, he was devoted to that kind of life. I would have thought so.

Although, in the first year-- probably that's the negative side of it-- about-- I would have thought about-- I wouldn't be the figure right-- about 20, probably, were just discharged. Not they went away, but were discharged as not being up to scratch or physically or mentally because the studies in that time, they were also very strict indeed. We had to, every week or few weeks, some kind of exams, papers, this sort of things.

If he wouldn't follow the right way, he just was chucked out and went home. So in the end, after five years there were 49, I think, of us who graduated in the end, from the whole turnover, over 200. It was quite a selection, quite a selection.

Where was the cadet school?

You want the name of the town?

Yes.

The town was called a Rawicz-- R-A-W-I-C-Z. It was just on the border of Germany at that time, southwest of Poznan, I would have thought.

And how old were you when you went to officer's school?

I went 1930. I was 22.

And how long was the course at the officer's school?

Three years. Three years.

What kind of a course, was it?

Well, studies were, because near to us was-- we were studying in parallel with the university, technical university, called Polytechnic of Poland. It's not the same as you've got here. But Polytechnic of Poland is the same as an ordinary university. For three years-- and the same teachers, professors, so on, plus military signals education or training.

Were you taught techniques of command?

Of course. Yes. Yes. All the time. You were in charge of, see, from small units, a few, and then platoons. That's the highest one, really, were in charge. I was, for a certain time, in charge, selected as a-- they called it prefect here, in that year of the whole the company, for the last two years in the school. This was certain something extra.

I don't know. Probably I had my five years cadet school in my blood, where I was trained. There was-- the cadet school

consisted, in the end, of five companies, of each one over 100. There was over 100 boys. And for instance, every day, an order, from the highest company, was selected as a commanding cadet of the whole battalion.

So one knew how to behave in front and how to give the command, this sort of thing. For instance, on Sunday, the whole battalion marched to the church, for instance. You had to get your voice properly and so on, and so on. So when I came to the officer's school, I had something behind me.

In comparison with officer's cadet school, the officer's cadets who joined the school not from the cadet school, they could have joined from the civilian life. But they had to have a certain military schooling in the so-called reserve. There were reserve cadet schools as well, officer's cadet school. Sorry-- because they're not the same.

So those were rather slightly roughish, military, because they had only one year or maximum two years behind them, partly. So the cadets from-- like me, for after five years, they had a certain advantage in the first year, probably. Later, this all went and mixed together.

Did you enjoy the course, at the officer's school or not?

Well, yes, I would have thought so. My aim was to finish it. So I learned. And you had to sit and learn. Yes. I never thought of changing my mind and going away. I could have opted out anytime, but never thought about it for a minute. This was my career which I had in my head.

Was there any part of the course that you didn't like?

Not really. Not really. I was engaged, not only in learning. I was engaged in sport and various kinds of things, and activities, in cultural activities. I joined a small theater team or something or performing or singing or something like that. It doesn't matter.

I joined-- really, what I learned as far as sport is concerned was fencing. I was training for nearly three years. And I reached quite a high standard with one of my friends. So we were even selected, for a certain time, to the pre-Olympic team from which the team was selected. We never went higher because we couldn't afford the time and training. But they took us in just as partners, so we couldn't do.

I would have thought-- from that I'm a bit proud of. And I still have a picture of me standing in the school foyer with my whole outfit, with my weapon and so on. That's the little things which I remember clearly. The rest, quite pleasant.

During the summer, we had field training. We were transferred from Warsaw-- the school was in Warsaw-- out of Warsaw into so-called signals training center, not far from Warsaw, where we spent about, I think actually, about two months, [NON-ENGLISH], field training, radio, telecommunication, telephone, building, marching, these sort of things, and maps, and so on and so on-- all the preparation, what the signalman, of the needs, once he is attached to a unit because signal officers, their attachment started very high.

As a young second lieutenant, you were not lower than the division, not a regiment or battalion-- division. That was the laws-- or higher. Lower, there were different ones too, from the reserve or trained differently. So we had to be quite acquainted with the tactical and operational work of a HQ of a division, for which we had to prepare and supply a working telecommunication or radio system. So that training we received in the school.

Of course, everybody, even anybody who finishes a high school with the best degree, he is rather-- once he goes into life, he has a lot of knowledge in his head. But you need a little practice, of course, because that's the thing. Of course, we have a second lieutenant to the regiment or to the unit. And there are these old other ranks, old weather beaten. And they knew probably more technically, practically. They knew. But very soon, we all managed because of our quite good training in the school.

When you finished officer's school, did you have a choice as to which unit you would go into?

I personally had. Certain top-- because I finished more or less on the top. Yes, I had. I belonged to those who had the choice. So I choose Poznan, where my mother lived. I wanted to be-- my mother was a widow, and I felt I had to help her a little. I was the first time who was a bread earner for myself. So I went there to help my mother a little. And I got in Poznan. So I spent there quite a few years.

Which unit did you join at Poznan?

I joined the so-called signals company attached to the 14th Infantry Division in Poznan.

Would each Infantry Division have a signals unit attached to it?

That's right. Yes.

And how big would the signals units be?

This was-- in a company, that means it consists of three platoons, I think, I couldn't tell you exactly the number of soldiers involved in it. But there were well over 100 anyway. And this was a completely independent unit, with all the administration system. Of course, at that time we moved-- our locomotive movements, if I may say so, were horses. So we have stables with horses and this sort of thing there in the beginning.

It's completely independent from anybody, a unit, attached to the division, with all the paraphernalia which you need with the technical ones. There was a radio platoon and, I think, three telecommunication platoons plus the equipment, as I say, stables, horses, carts, this sort of thing.

Did you have motorcars in the unit?

Not in the beginning. The first motorcycle with a sidecar for the commanding officer-- I joined this in 1933. And I think it came in 1935 or something like that. And a year later, there was the first heavy truck, a lorry or something. So we were really slowly being equipped with a motor-- motorcars or this type of thing.

Did that worry you and your brother officers, that you were so heavily dependent on horses?

Not at all because we were trained with it. I had my personal horse. And I was trained in officer's school already, horse riding and this sort of thing, everything. We went into that. We knew what it is all about. Motorcars, lorries, or trucks that was a novelty.

Of course, we had a very good one, because this helped a lot of in movement and transferring soldiers and equipment. But no, not at all.

But I mean, in relation to the possibility of having to fight a foreign enemy, did you think that-- did that worry you, that heavy dependence on horses might be a disadvantage to you?

Well, in 1933, mind you, being a freshly commissioned sublieutenant, I don't think I was thinking about the war at that time and that I will fight, say, a better-- mind you, even at that time, even the Germany, Hitler that came to power only in '32, so they were not really the power in 1939. So I don't think I would have thought a disadvantage. We were proud of our horses, cavalry and this sort of thing, at that time.

Was most of the equipment that you were using Polish equipment or foreign equipment?

Beginning, foreign of course. When we gained independence in 1918-- and of course, you remember that Poland was in the war with Russia at that time, immediately, in 1920. Poland was created from three different countries-- Austria, Russia, and Germany. And all, in Poland, equipment was Russian and German and Austrian. Plus there came an army from France at that time. You might have heard about it-- John O'Hara-- again, French equipment, which came to Poland, especially radio equipment and so on.

So the equipment was very mixed, as far as technical signal is concerned. The same was in the weapons, with the rifles from the-- I don't know-- the 1870 war probably or something, in the beginning. But very soon we started our signal. The signals were equipped in, probably, '35, could be. We were receiving Polish production of telephones, exchange units, and radio as well in 1937--

[AUDIO OUT]

Session number 8838, reel number 2. Mr. Bogacki, reel 2.

Well, as I said, in 1937, we started receiving radio transmitters or transceivers really, radio stations, field radio stations called N1 and N2 produced completely in Poland. And they were really fantastic. I have been told that there were one of the best at that time as military equipment in the world, very good indeed.

And in the end, also for a higher command, on the level of army and even the HQ, were radio stations called W1 and W2, which were novelty at that time in the world. They could transmit even pictures or maps, this whole thing, apart from radiotelegraphy and radiophonic. How would you say that, radiophone? Speech.

Speech, yes.

But unfortunately, this was all not enough. The war broke out shortly after. And we went into the war probably not fully prepared but with full of enthusiasm, enthusiasm and really wanting to fight the Germans, who invaded us anyway.

Before we go on to the war, could you tell me if the Polish army in the '30s was a conscript army or a volunteer army?

Conscript. Conscript.

And how long would a young man have to serve?

Signals, two years.

And in the infantry?

I'm not sure. I think a year. I'm not sure really. Sorry, I can't tell you the answer to the question.

So was it all young men who had to go into the army?

All the young men born at a certain time-- there might have been exceptions or something like that. But every year we received a new one.

And at what age would they normally be conscripted?

In what age?

Yes.

At what age? No, just a second. They were 20-something youngsters, young men. So it must be about 20-something or other-- 21, 22, or something, or some who were delayed because they were released before, but they were taken on later on. For instance, students who studied, they didn't need to join, but they had to after the study. After they finished, they had to join the army and make their training, normally in the reserve. Cadet officer schools, because they had some education or they had, they were entitled to get the title of an officer later on, could be commissioned in the reserve.

Would any of the NCOs be professional soldiers?

All. Only the very low rank of a corporal, for instance, the highest, who could have graduated in those two years, if he was bright there, he was quickly a lance corporal and a corporal. But from a corporal upwards, really, they were all professionals.

What was the attitude of the professional soldiers and officers to the conscripts? Did they welcome a conscript army or was there any agitation amongst the professional soldiers to have a professional army?

No. Professionally-- professional we're only other ranks and officers. The soldiers were all conscripts.

But did the officers say amongst themselves sometimes that, instead of Poland having a conscript army, they should have a completely volunteer army, like Britain has today?

I never heard about it, never heard about it. We just were brought up like that. And this was happening from the very beginning that way. And we just took it for granted. It was a normal thing for us. Every time they went home and new came in. And they were trained, and they went off again, and so on. That's all it was.

What was the usual attitude of the conscripts? Were they willing or difficult or what?

Well, probably not all of them, not all of them. But there was a certain discipline demanded from them. In general, we had-- I had anyway in the company I was, I never heard about any problems with them. On the contrary, we tried-- of course, in the signals, they were not illiterate ones because in the infantry you might have found illiterate ones. But they were educated to write and read and so-called three R's, I should say.

But in the signals they were also taught. There were some kind of education given them further, apart from that. Always an hour or two per week they were assembled, and there was an education officer, one of us, who just took on, give them a bit of history, this sort of thing.

No, no. The army cared about the conscripts, really cared about them, tried to give the best for them.

Were the officers all Polish-speaking, or did you have any German-speaking or Ukrainian or Lithuanian-speaking officers?

Certainly not German-speaking, although we all knew the language because we were brought up in that time. No. No. No. The only foreign officers of foreign nationality, because you must remember-- you mentioned Ukraine. Ukrainian were Poles, Polish citizens because Poland-- part of Ukraine belonged to Poland. Part of Lithuania belonged-- Belorussian belonged to Poland on the eastern part. So there.

And they were normal Poles, and they might have been officers in the army. But of foreign ones, they were such so-called Georgian, starting came from Georgia and the Caucasian there. And after the end of First World War, Georgia was overrun by the Bolsheviks and so on so on. And they emigrated. And some of them came to Poland and were accepted in the Polish army as so-called contract officers.

They looked like we professionals. They had a certain contract with us. And they had the ranks of, say, lieutenant, captain, major, and so on. Not many, but they were excellent officers. They were all-- whoever I remember in the signal, and we had a few of them there, they are very excellent officers, nothing wrong with them. Of course, Georgian patriots and sort of thing, enemies of Russia because they over and this sort of thing.

Apart from them, I couldn't say there were any of a nationality, with different nationality officers in the Polish army.

But did you know of any people in the Polish army who spoke Ukrainian or Lithuanian or Belorussian?

Oh, it was very common, very common. All the people who lived-- were born as I was, before the First World War, and were in the Russian part, from Warsaw west-- east, sorry-- they all had to be at least bilingual, Russian and Ukrainian, normally.



And could you communicate easily with them?

Well, they all talk-- they spoke Polish, of course. Of course. If somebody reached the rank of Officer, he must have been fluent Polish.

And were Germans excluded from the officers corps?

I don't know what you mean. German nationals?

German-speaking people in Poland.

No, no. I was a German-speaking boy from boyhood. Of course, I had both in the German schools. I acquired the language as a boy and never forgot it. No. No. No. Not at all.

All the Austrian people spoke German because this was their language once upon the time. They had to live with all the officers. The Polish army consists of ex-German officers, ex-Austrian, and ex-Russian.

But you had people in Poland before the war who considered themselves, as the Hitler regime led to call them, ethnic Germans, who lived in Poland, people who regarded German as their first language. Did they go into the officer corps?

Well, I understand your question. There were quite a lot of, we call them, who settled in Poland. There were quite a lot who, after the end of the war, the Germans had the right to stay in Poland, opt for Poland, or go out. Some of them stayed there because they were landowners, these sort of things. And they settled, especially not far from Poznan or Pomerania, slightly north from Poznan, which proved, in 1939, that there were all really engaged by-- well, put it differently, were pro-Hitler, quite a lot of them.

If some of them were, during the, say from 1920 to '39, or say around '30, accepted the Polish army, this I am not-- I can't answer that question because I was a young fellow at that time and just starting my career myself. I would have thought, if somebody behaved normally and that he was born-- well, he wasn't born in Germany, really, but might be a suspect, probably there must have been some kind of selection in the secret, the security branch of the Polish army, probably. But as I say, that's beyond my possibility to answer.

But did you personally know of such ethnic Germans in the officer corps?

Well, I must say, yes now-- not at that time. But I think I will tell you that when we come to my war time. I came across quite a good friend of mine-- ahem, sorry for my throat-- who, during the underground, which we will talk about later, collaborated with the Germans. And many, many people lost their life because-- yes. The answer is yes.

We'll talk about him later.

Later, yes.

Now you said that, in 1933, you hadn't regarded any danger from the new regime in Germany. When did you start to feel that a war with Germany might be possible?

About '37, '8, because I was transferred in 1937 from Poznan into the Polish Signals Education Center as an instructor and commanding officer of one of the addition of officers. And there, very often within the officer mess, this subject came on. This was-- anyway, this was in the official press at that time, quite well known. Yes, at that time we started thinking quite-- we were convinced that the war is inevitable.

Can you remember any particular thing which started to give you the idea that war would be inevitable, any particular incident?

Well, we probably thought that it might be avoided, as I say, '38. But still there were always border clashes with the Germans, from top, from Gdansk or Danzig in German, along the border. Then there was always something there happening.

But this is probably the political side of the whole thing. There were the connections of our minister of foreign affairs and so on back. That's a different problem worth a thought. But as an officer at that time, I must say, I was very engaged in the education, being in charge of certain things. I did not involve myself or spend much time and thought about it.

I knew I am in the army. I'm teaching now. I'm preparing, having these younger future colleagues under me and thinking about the war. We're at war. We are professionals. We are just going to war. That's all it was, really.

So I haven't given this many thoughts about it. But certainly we were aware of that kind of possibility.

What did you personally think about the regime in Germany at this time?

Well, how to answer that question? We knew, and certainly I, from observing or talking, discussing, that since Hitler came to power, all Germany was transformed after the Weimar Republic and was reorganized. And he pulled all the nation behind him. This was a fantastic psychological change.

And I think when the war started in 1939, there were not many Germans who were against him, not many. The whole nation was behind him. Although today, you might listen and hear and read different, sometimes, opinions. If he would have won, the whole Germany would be just a menace in the world.

In 1939, or before rather-- you asked me before that-- yes, we were aware of building up strength. There were little happenings, which came to the mind of, like me, young people who was not involved, who didn't see-- thought about much about external politics, little happenings which made you think. For instance, Poles were sometimes-- not Poles, sorry. Jews were persecuted or just, in 1937, it was quite normal in Germany.

We read about it. The shops were stoned. They were put in concentration camps. They were already known at that time.

For instance, the Olympics in 1936, this was-- for us it was unbelievable, when this famous sprinter, only the one, Hitler wouldn't go and congratulate him. He just walked out. You see, this made you think, this little behavior, irrational completely at that time.

But I wouldn't go further than that. We knew that we have-- well, we knew historically Germany was never a friend of ours, never, from the time's beginning. Since even 10th century, when Poland started existing on the map.

And, yes, we are preparing ourselves, I think, because at that-- 19-- I think '37, Poland created a big industrial center south of Warsaw. And this was mainly directed into producing military equipment. And Poland had, at that time, I have been told and the war I think proved it, one of the best anti-aircraft guns already at that time, which were later taken over.

By the way, I talked about this, in 1937, when there appeared these radio stations here. The first thing the Germans came to Poland, they started producing them immediately for their own army. They accepted them as the best one.

Now, at this time, just in the time immediately before the war started, what was the attitude of you and your other officers towards the question of the possibility of an alliance with Russia against Nazi Germany? Was that-- did the officers oppose that or were they in favor of an ally?

Which year, you say?

Say, around about 1938 or '39.

Russia was never a friend and possible cooperator. Although, there was a peace treaty with Russia at that time. I can't

remember, that Pilsudski made and in which year it was. But well, in 1939, this was all, by the Russian, thrown into the basket, and Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement you have. Immediately everything was invalid. No, we never trusted the Russian.

So who did the officer corps favor as possible Allies against Germany?

Well, 1939, you know, there were our minister of foreign affairs, Beck, came to England here and talked to Chamberlain. And in the end, after long discussions, Britain agreed to help and protect, come into the war in case Poland would be invaded. The same, shortly after, it was agreed with France. This was 1939. April, I think, Beck into Chamberlain here.

But this was a different story, Chamberlain's attitude to the war, who believed in cooperation or agreement with Germans, which actually, by the way, was against it. Whom we preferred? My word-- I don't know really.

We don't prefer anybody to invade you. That's the first answer. But--

To be allies with Poland.

Oh, to be allies. Neither Russia or-- if the war would be against Russia-- this is completely guesswork, I'm saying. If this whole thing would be historical by some trick of providence would be reversed, and we fought with Russia and the Germans, probably-- I can't say. That's a hypothetical question, really. I can't answer those questions.

I know only that, once Beck received or got an agreement with England and France, we were uplifted. We believed. We trusted. We looked forward. And once in September 1939, the war broke out, we just awaited month or day by day, week by week, month, to the beginning of the war between England and so on.

But it was declared three days later, on the 1st of-- 3rd of September, and started with leaflets thrown on Germany. This was a big disappointment, a big disappointment. But that's what we believed we might survive somehow. We fought hard because even-- there still were fights on the 25th of-- it was still in October, I think there were. In the beginning of October, there were fights in Poland. Pockets, but there were fights.

So was there bitterness amongst the officer corps when there was a lack of military effort by France and England after September the 3rd, 1939?

Well, certainly we were disappointment. I can tell you only this little group I was in because I was attached to the army HQ, which was situated on the northern part of Poland, against East Prussia. You know, there was this little pocket divided by the corridor. That's where we were situated.

We were very-- but, mind you, I don't think we had much time to think about it because on the third or fourth, we were already beaten. The army just rolled over us. We tried to board that-- there was a retreat, retreat. And the fight and retreat and so on. Before I regained my mental balance after the end of that September 5, where I landed somehow, I'll tell you later, in Warsaw.

And suddenly you were there. And what now? Then you thought, what the-- on earth happened? Why haven't they come? Why haven't-- they could. There was nothing of the German army, which could defend themselves on the western part against France or England, well France mainly. The Maginot, and this sort of things they had sat in the bunkers there and did nothing. If they went forwards, it would be just-- must be different.

Now, let's go back to the actual German attack on the 1st of September, 1939. Can you remember what you were doing then and what your reaction was when you heard that the German attack had been launched? As I said, I was, at that time, this was the end of the military cadet school course, September. They were just sent for the last-- before the last official commissioning, where they got their stars on their epaulet.

So I was, at that time, in that center just doing something-- I don't know-- in my office or something like that. Not the

first-- I was-- my war started on the 23rd of August. I was waking up about very early in the morning. It could be 3:00, it could be 4 o'clock in the morning. A messenger came to him with a paper, official paper-- mobilization.

And got the paper-- I knew what I have to do because I was trained for that. And I just packed up. And say, half an hour or 40 minutes, I was in that place where I should be and start organizing my war company. I was commanding officer of a company.

Where were you?

Not far from that education center, which was near Warsaw, called Zegrze, if you want to say it-- Z-E-G-R-Z-E, Zegrze. This was the signals communication-- signals education center.

And was Zegrze your mobilization post?

It was. This was a village not far from Zegrze, where-- there was a point where I had to go there. There was already a house there, and so on so on, not far, about a few miles. So I start on the 23rd in advance of the war. This was, of course, advanced mobilization.

And while-- and I had to be ready in about-- I don't think-- 18 or 19 hours they gave me. Everything came to you in that short time. Soldiers came to you, equipment, horses, cars, everything. You just had to-- from nowhere, because the mobilization papers went out in the special way to all these people. They were mobilized.

Half through that, I got a telephone call already from Warsaw, from the army commanding HQ officer-- he was probably chief of staff or somebody-- to report immediately in Warsaw. This mobilization is still on here, so my second-in-charge, a sublieutenant, who was my pupil in a way once upon a time, I left him there to finish that whole thing and went already and to receive orders already, to move as soon as I'm ready immediately.

There was a fortress not far from Warsaw, called Modlin on where the river Vistula, or Wisla, Vistula in your way, and Narew joined Modlin. It's a big pre-First World War fortress-- to organize the HQ from the signals' point of view because all the signals, HQ will move there as soon as I'm ready. You know, all these officers, telephone, this sort of thing, radio an so on. And that's when I started my war.

On the 1st of September, I was in the office of my company, in the fortress there. And suddenly, early morning it was, a alarm, air alarm, an airplane come. And the first bomb-- bomb came on that fortress, on the side somewhere. Nobody was killed, a little damage. And that's when the war started.

Did the German attack take you by surprise or not?

Well, we were listening to the radio, of course.