

Session number 8838, reel number 9. Mr. Bogacki, reel 9. I think there's another incident you'd like to relate about a chap who managed to escape a German dragnet in a wood.

Yes. Well, as I said, probably in the first part of my talk here, since we discovered that we can't transmit from one place because this will be easily discovered-- that's what happened in 1941 in February-- we started to move our radio stations and radio transceivers around the country and transmit and run. One of those units I located in the woods connected under the cover of the partisan unit, which operated in those woods so they could protect it. It's about 100, 150 kilometers southeast from Warsaw.

Anyway, this operated for quite a time, nearly-- probably a year or more. And I always sent, through that unit, the lengthy telegrams, which were not emergency one but had to be sent, because emergency one had to go from Warsaw. And I had no choice. The only thing I always said to my superiors, if you want something disregarding of the losses, then, all right, you must bear the cost. But I don't agree. Whoever will be the superior, be in the air more than 10 minutes because they are on my steps. And I have to protect my people. And the superior general of the Home Army accepted that.

But the lengthy one, I send to the woods. Of course, after a lengthy time, they knew that something is operated there. And probably they had enough. And they surrounded it, the woods, by a battalion or something-- strength of German soldiers and started to comb through it. Of course, they met our partisans, and the fight started.

And this was just at the time when the radio operator was, of course, operating. That was the guiding link for their goniometry and guide them to the place. He had no escape because he was surrounded with the partisans. The partisans somehow fought and sent through, but he couldn't escape. Not transceiver, of course, in the woods, he could-- he had no electricity there. I mean, no grid.

What we supplied him with is an aggregate petrol-driven aggregate connected with a generator. And that generator, in turn, supplied the energy to the transceiver. Anyway, when he was surrounded, he threw that generator in a prepared dugout hole, covered it with leaves or something, and himself climbed the nearest tree in between thick branches there and sat there hoping for the best. And luckily he escaped because they looked around. They looked everywhere. But nobody, by sheer luck, didn't lift their head just on that particular tree, haven't spotted it.

And that's why he came alive out of it. And that's the way of life a radio operator had to go through in many times. It's quite enduring, quite, really, nervous-cracking event for anybody. You must remember that. I'll tell you probably there was some other subject. And this goes day by day, this operating and being exposed to German forces who want to interfere.

I think in this connection you were saying earlier that it was a great relief to you when you had fresh people who were dropped to help you.

Yes, certainly. Certainly. Because, as I said just now, these radio operator, they were every day in the air. It's obvious for anybody that, once you press the key, the wave goes in the air and can be overheard and located easily. So he just, pressing the key, said, here I am. Here, there is no secret. So they knew they have to do the job and run. And this is year after year.

This took certain toll. I had to change certain radio operators, give him a lengthy leave. Well, I myself had never a leave. I had to stick with them all the time. But I couldn't afford them to crack. So of course, we demanded certain help from outside, from England. And in England, from 1940-- term of '40, '41, they already-- they came to a conclusion that they have to send to Poland some volunteers-- they were all volunteers-- to help the underground army for various positions, from highly ranked officers to other ranks or even privates.

And also, in that respect, some radio operators were prepared. Of course, they went-- they not only had to be good radio operators, but they had to be taught how to behave in un-normal conditions. That means in conspiracy. How to conceal this, how to defend themselves, how to walk in the occupied Poland, which they didn't know because they weren't in

England. They came in England after the fall-- after fall of-- or the loss of the battle in 1939, through various kinds of Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Italy, France. And they finally landed in, after the fall of France, in England.

And they'd never seen a occupied country, Poland. So when they came there, they might think they can move just like pre-war times. So they were taught that kind of a way of life also.

Anyway 19-- my first, I think-- I'm not quite sure, but it was 1942, I think, the second half '42, when the first radio operators, one or two, were dropped to us, quite a lot of them 1943, and a lot of them 1944. This was already four or five years of our struggle there.

And they, of course, stepped into the place of our tired radio operators, who remained with them as experts, gave them advice. So this was a big help to us. And this happened in all branches of our military underground, obviously in departments for the partisans, for the terrorist part, for the sappers, and infantry artillery, even air force. We had some-- not an air force with airplanes, but there was an air force department, which was connected with the type of work of receiving drops from England, because there were supplies and containers of various war or military material, machine guns, grenades, or money as well. Whatever you think we needed, they dropped to us.

Did you find that these chaps who'd been out of Poland for so many years, that when they came back, that there were any points of conflict or difference of opinion with you people who'd been there for a long time?

No. No. Because they came to us with a big admiration because they were taught this. Because I'm not praising ourselves, but I know when I contacted here, and I know how they were taught. They were told, look these are people, from the very beginning they stay there. They fight with impossible targets there. So they knew they are coming to something which they haven't experienced, which we've done already. And they had a big admiration for our people [INAUDIBLE]. And I myself have for my radio operators. They were marvelous people.

So, no, they were not. But once they were dropped, they were not sent immediately in the terrain. No. No. They went through a certain-- how would you say that properly? In a adjustable period. They were connected with families. They have a room given there, the people. If it was a young boy, some young girl walked with him, for instance, pretending and so on, giving them some ease, preparing of an ease of movement, adjusting them to the circumstances. This lasted sometimes a few months. This needed time.

And then they went on their own in the terrain. They were sent here and there, even to the Far East. Some of them landed even in the Russian occupied part, just behind the German army there because we had our secret service from there as well, in Kyiv and this sort of thing.

Now you talked earlier about the radio links that you had with the south and with the west. But I think that you also said that at one time you had some radio link eastward with Russia.

Yes. This was a short period, but-- just a second. It was the year 1942, '42. I might be not correct, not strictly. This is what, I think, April 1942. This lasted two or three months. For a purpose, this was the height really or the turning point of the German action in Russia more or less. And our secret service, whatever they discovered about Germans, because we had quite a big network of secret cells, were transmitted to England and, from our departments, transferred to the English forces. And they, in turn, informed the Russians.

So there was a moment, some tense moment, where they asked us to transfer straight to the Russians. And that's where I got the elements-- frequency, time, and so on. And I got the link with them. But it lasted not long. If I'm right in thinking or remembering, this was probably from April to June '42.

And then suddenly came an order from London, stop it. I never discovered why. Russia was calling us for a long time. But I have asked them not to reply. But that's the only link I had.

They had, during the Warsaw rising, another link. But this was after my time because, as you know, I was arrested in 1943, December. When they approached the Warsaw in that Warsaw rising period, there was a link established with the

commanding officer of the Russian army on the front of-- just behind Warsaw. This was the second time.

When you established your link in '42, which part of Russia were you communicating with?

I really haven't checked it. But I have been told, because this wasn't my concern really, this was no-- from a technical point of view, it doesn't make any difference, 1,000 or 2,000 miles, if he is west or east, 1,000 miles doesn't matter. But I have been told that it was not somewhere in the realm of Kuybyshev. That's what I have been told. If I am right, I don't know.

I should probably-- I could probably find out if I would search the archive somewhere, which was quite a job. But that's what I have been told at that time, which doesn't matter really. It must be not far from the Russian HQ, who took-- who wanted the news from us.

What type of material were you sending?

That's not-- I can't tell you that because I don't know. In conspiracy, you know, you have only a job to do. And my job was to keep a link. What the commanding officer or whoever sent was ciphered. And you know, they are secrets. They're not told. Probably in the next room who did that didn't know what it's all about, so certainly not the radio telegraphs or me.

I knew only one thing in that whole, my period. When there was this famous Peenemunde bombardment. I knew that this is coming because I had a good personal contact with the chief of the secret forces. So he talked to me and said, look Konrad, I want that telegram who is here. I'm talking you personally. This is about that. This must be in London in two hours.

I said, all right. It will be done. Then that's what he told me. But this was a personal confidence. Otherwise, nobody tells anybody this kind of thing. So whatever was in telegrams, I couldn't tell you of course. It's impossible.

Now, I think that there was also a period when you had some contact with a political party called the People's Party.

Yes. That's a pre-war party, peasants or People's Party, where I knew this wartime chairman of that, who lived in Poland. Because the chairman really was in the east, but he was a second in command in Poland. And he knew me personally and approached me to help him to get the connection with his wireless to the ministry of interior in England. Technically, this for me is no problem. But I'm not allowed to do this.

I said, look, my dear friend. Although I know you very well, but I can't do it. Because anybody can come to me and ask that question. It's only if you go to the commanding officer, the general of the Polish underground army, which he knew well, and if I get the permission from him by my normal channel, then I do it for you. So he did it.

And in a certain time, my commanding officer of the certain department said, look-- my crypto was [? Zaremba ?] in that time. Yes, he wants-- and he was even -- Yes, you can give it to him. I know what he wants. Help him. Because his connection there was the future prime minister after Sikorski. The fellow is Mikolajczyk. So he wanted to contact him.

So one day I took this radio operator, who was once with this heater's coat, was my personal emergency man. I said, look, [INAUDIBLE] come on. Let's go and help these chaps here. Take your transceiver with you in a briefcase. Let's go. Help them.

At a certain time, not on the first session-- something went wrong, but on the second session, he connected them. And they had their own radio operator there. He instructed him. I lent him that transceiver for a certain time, till they find out or build some old one. Anyway, in the future they were dropped also from England, the same things for the same purpose. So that's the kind of thing I did.

So another one-- politically representing the Polish government in exile was a second echelon, if that's the right word, of vice ministers called, at that time, who lived in Poland. So in charge was so-called vice president, or in our language, a

delegate of the Polish government in exile, located or living in Poland.

Of course, the government and those delegates on the second echelon of the government in Poland, they wanted to talk to them. They want their own radio link as well. And they had their unit. They had their operator and so on. But they couldn't get it working. So again I was called in there with my radio operator experts there. And some little advice, this and that and that from me or from them, and we helped them to get it.

But they were in an easier position than from that People's Party because, if something didn't work, then they had the permission to send emergency telegrams through my military networks, this kind of thing.

Had you personally had any political affiliation before the war?

No, because Polish forces were apolitical. And I was educated and-- and, I might even say, brainwashed or brought up like apolitical. The army was apolitical. We had no right of voting, nothing.

When there was a vote or something, we did not take part, never. There was only one, just before the war, where they asked the army to vote. But this was just an odd man out-- but never.

Of course, people had their, I mean, point of view, this sort of thing, but not-- I couldn't be a member of a political party as a professional soldier, of course. For reserve is was different.

Did you personally have much contact with the German policy towards what might be called the elite in Poland, or the intellectuals? Because I've read in various German sources that the Germans wanted to try to remove that kind of section of the Polish population.

I'm not quite clear in that, what you ask in that question. You mean before the war?

During the occupation.

That they wanted to eliminate a certain elite?

Yes.

Well, it happened. Of course, it happened. Yes, they tried, not as much as the Russian did. They just took all the intelligentsia and everything, just sent to Russia and Siberia. But Germans, yes. For instance, well known Polish university professors in Lwów, or the German called it in Lemberg, they just arrested and shot them. The same happened, I think, in the Kraków area, quite a lot of them.

Pre-war politicians who remained, they knew their addresses. In the first year, quite a lot of them, quite a few of them were arrested and shot in so famous place, Palmiry, near Warsaw. Yes, they tried to eliminate, because their aim, if one reads Hitler's Mein Kampf, the aim of Poland was to create a nation of slaves of the workings without any power, any meaning, just a subordinate second-type of human being. Because they regarded as them a super race.

But how much personal contact did you have with this policy?

I had no personal contact at all, not at all.