

Rabbi Gryn, reel five. You said there was no act of kindness by the population in Berlin, but was there, on the contrary, any overt hostility to you?

Well, I mean, nobody actually came up the sidewalks or the pavements and hit us. But no, I sensed a deep complicity with it. One often speaks about this whole period of the Holocaust in terms of the victims, the perpetrators, and the bystanders.

And the most troubling image I continue to have is actually the bystanders. I really don't understand how could they not have looked or reacted. It's a puzzling thing.

I don't know. Perhaps they saw us as the enemy. I mean, they were certainly encouraged to think that.

Was there any sabotage or resistance?

Yes, lots. I was a naughty boy many times. Talk of sabotage, I had heard that if you can get sugar into a combustion engine, it will seize up. So during some of my Bauhof periods, once a week or so, we were given some marmalade. I had assumed that there had to be some sugar in it. I suspect it was all synthetic, anyway.

I didn't eat the marmalade. I collected it. I had a funny little tin. I collected portions and portions of marmalade, carried them on my person. And when I could, unobserved, I would take-- open sort of the petrol cap of lorries and pour it all in. [CHUCKLES]

Or when I'm working near railway lines, my favorite occupation was just to remove bolts, nuts, hoping one day, one train will just-- I mean, yes, everything that one could. That was really a pathetic form of resistance, but that kind of motivated me a lot.

And on one occasion, I was party to the killing of a guard. He was a Ukrainian who was very dangerous, very vicious. He literally used to just-- I mean, when others were not watching, perhaps, he would take his rifle, swing it above his head, and just bring it down on whoever.

Where was this?

Lieberose. He couldn't have been more than 18 or 19. And he was really a terrible menace.

And once, on a detail, we had to go back in the middle of the day to fetch the soup containers. It was two people with sort of wooden staves per container. And we had-- were entitled to two such containers, so four people went back with this one guard.

Really, we didn't even have to plot it, because there was such an instant realization of really what we had to do. Not I, but more the older people.

We stopped to rest, or whatever it was. And he sort of leaned his gun next to him. And I was one of the people who held him with another one. And we used that bloody gun of his, one of the other people, especially. I buried him there.

We could do it because we were able to sort of sneak back into the work area almost unobserved-- in fact, we were unobserved-- and just mingled. And I don't think they missed him until the end of work.

We stood outside that evening for hours. They would never tell us why, because obviously we knew why. And I was in great fear for many days that possibly one of the others might-- I don't know-- own up or whatever. But--

So they were just hoping somebody would crack and spill the beans.

Yeah, but nobody did.

And this guard was hit on the head to be killed?

Yep. Fortunately, he wasn't wearing a steel helmet. It was just a cloth cap.