

Marsha Segall, reel seven. Marsha, you'd been telling me how the Russian woman from the work camp had taken you to the German medical unit due to the injuries of your hands and your feet. Could you now tell me about this medical unit where it was and approximately what date this was and what happened to you in that unit?

Well, I think the date is very difficult to say exactly, but I think it was end of January. And the unit was very lucky for me that I haven't been Gestapo or SS unit. It was ordinary army, and it was the last stand against the Russians. I mean, they really were fully aware that the war is nearly finished, and they thought that I was German because there were so many Prussian refugees at that time, and I spoke German fluently, and they really wanted to help me.

There was a doctor who opened also the bandages of my hands, and he saw how bad it is. And he said that he can do nothing because they didn't have any facilities. It was just a surgery for minor things, but there was no hospital, and promised to take me next day. They didn't have any cars or lorries. He will take me with a cart and horse with some soldiers who were going for supplies in the next town, which was Wallenstein.

They will take me, and they will bring me to the hospital there. The same night, I slept in the Russian camp with the women. And early in the morning, they really came to fetch me. And it was not very far, but with the horse and cart, it took some time. But it still was daytime, and they had some errands to do for themselves and for the unit, so they didn't have much time to check with the hospital admission, and they just dropped me and put me outside the door of a big hospital in Wallenstein. And they left.

When I entered, the hospital was empty. It was evacuated, and the whole town was in process of evacuation. And I was really desperate. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't go very much. I didn't have anything. And people were running.

And then I saw a car passed. It was the main street, and they had a loudspeaker. And they announced that everybody who wants to be evacuated should come to the railway station, and there are trains which will evacuate everybody to inside Germany because the Russians have been rather near. And automatically, I just-- I don't know how, but with the last strength, really, I just made my way to the railway station. I just followed people.

Were you in much pain at this stage?

Very much.

Were your hands bandaged?

The hands were bandaged and painful, but the main thing-- I couldn't walk. It was terribly difficult to walk.

Due to the frostbite.

Yes, because it was all puffy and swollen. I imagine it was the same thing as my hands. But I just couldn't reach it. And it was never cleaned or bandaged, and I had dirty shoes, and it was really a frightening sight.

And I came to the railway station, and there was really chaos. Never seen anything like it. People shouting, screaming, SS shooting at looters. I mean, Germans looted from each other. And the trains were not-- there have been again-- it wasn't proper trains for travel, but it was again--

Cattle trucks.

Cattle trucks. And because there have been a lot of people who wanted to go. Everybody, actually, wanted to be evacuated because of the fear for the Russians. They called them the Ivan. Was terrible.

How were you feeling, being with German civilians?

I don't think I felt anything. I did everything automatically. I didn't really care very much, yet I didn't want to remain in

a place where there was nobody. It was also lucky that it got dark very early. And when I reached the train and the cattle truck, that particular truck that somebody helped me in, they couldn't see me because I didn't look very, very proper.

And it was also the wounds had a funny smell, the pus. And I sat in a corner, and I also had always remarks from people that, well, isn't it a funny smell here? And they told us that we're going to Gotenhafen, which to me it sounded very Dutch. But we didn't travel that long, just a few hours. Really, time didn't mean very much to me at that time, so I can't describe it exactly.

But we came when it was dark. It looked like night, but I can't tell you the time. We came to town, which afterwards I discovered that Gotenhafen was really Gdynia, which they renamed it. And we've been all told to get out, and I was helped by people to get out.

And on the platform, as far as I remember, we've been met by Martin Bormann. And it was a big speech, saying that we are the first train of German refugees, that we won't be long as refugees. We will all return back soon home, and that they have got a secret weapon which will drive the Allies to the sea.

I mean, nobody knew what the secret weapon is. I guess now. But they really believed and made everybody believe that they still have got a chance of winning the war.

What was your reaction to this?

I don't think I had any reaction at all at this time. I thought, what will happen will happen. I didn't think about anything.

Were you frightened of being so far into Germany?

No, I wasn't frightened at all. I mean, I was indifferent. And I had so much pain that my main thought was to relieve the pain, any way to live or die, but just not have this pain. And then there was lots of ambulances, and it was a command that everybody who is not well should stand on the left, everybody who is well to the right, and they will be housed.

I went to the left and was put in an ambulance, and with other people who weren't well. Quite a lot of Germans suffered frostbite. Not as bad as I, but hands, feet, because there are also a lot of them who walked or have been in carts from Prussia to the Polish territory, which was quite a long way.

And automatically, we've been taken to the main hospital in Gdynia, actually, Gotenhafen. The sisters have been all Polish, the doctors German. It was also a tremendous movement because a lot of army was stationed there, German army. And because the battles were raging in Prussia, I knew very little of what's happening, politically, what's happening in the world around me.

And I want to remember it clearly that a nurse took me to a bathroom in the hospital, and she cut the shoes and took off everything I had. And she looked at me, and she said, child, where were you? Because I was so underweight that I looked much younger. I shrunk. I looked like a child.

And she had a look at my hair, which were not cut in the concentration camp. And she decided that they are so filthy and dirty that she took a big scissors and cut my hair.

What was your reaction to this?

I think actually she put me also in a bathtub. And the hot water, it was a relief. I mean, I let her do what she wanted. And I thought odd that she didn't ask me more questions.

What was your reaction?

Because I didn't look like anybody who came to the hospital. Yet she didn't put two and two together at all.

What was your reaction when she took your shoes off and you saw your feet?

I didn't even-- I didn't-- I tried not to look.

Can you describe what they looked like, what your feet looked like at this stage?

It started-- gangrene set, and they started to shrink. Some have been swollen and puffy, tears, and some were black. And my hands the same. I mean, it was like wasted [? blood. ?] It has got the same reaction, really, like burning, because there is no blood supply. And it wastes, and you have to amputate because gangrene can spread.

And after that, they put me in a white nightie and put me in a room with another woman who had frostbite on her toes. She was German. Her name was Frau Tamm from Hela, which is a little Island near Königsberg. And she had her two daughters with her, one about nine and one about five. And as she didn't have a home, they let them be with us, the two girls.

During the day, they've been in the room. And at night, I think they put them to sleep in another room. It was very white sheets and a pillow, and I think I was rather happy to be there, because it was such a long time that I didn't have it, that I really didn't care about my hands or feet, but I was like an animal feeling, that I was well looked after.

Then it came. The doctors came to check everybody's injuries. And then it's the first time I saw my feet, and I just can't forget it, because I was covered. They just uncovered the bit in the end to see the feet, and the doctor just scraped the flesh, which was like burned, and it was the bones, like sticks, you could see it.

And then I thought that they are beyond any help. I thought I'll never be able to walk at all. And my hands I saw already in the Russian women's camp.

Your skin just came away from the bone?

Yes, it's just this-- with a little scalp knife, they just took it off. And they told me that I will be operated the same afternoon.

Did they tell you exactly what they would do in the operation?

Not really. But they told me that they have to amputate, because otherwise it will spread. I didn't know how much or what, but that it has to be done.

What was your reaction?

I don't think at that time, till a long time after, I had no feelings at all. I really didn't care what happens one way or another. I was happy that I was in a bed and that I was fed. I don't think I thought about anybody or anything.

It was a very funny period, because I think my mind shut. It's not thinking of past, present, or future. It was this moment I was in bed. I was fed-- all that mattered. And then I remember clearly the operation, because they didn't have at that time injections.

I don't know whether they didn't use it at that time, or they did or they were short of it because it was the end of the war.

What kind of injections?

The anesthetic, it was this ether. And they put a cloth over my mouth, and they dropped ether, and they told me to count. That I remember clearly, because I counted till hundred. And when I came to hundred, from eins, zwei, drei, and I came to hundred, I heard the surgeon talking to another one, or to the nurse, the operating nurse, I don't know who, or to the team, saying "now we can begin."

And I wanted to shout to tell them, I can hear you. And then I was out. So they most probably saw from my eyes that I am going to sleep. And then I woke back in the room with this Frau Tamm. She had also her toes amputated.

And it was rather a very funny situation, because the nurses have been Polish, and they regarded every German as an enemy. So naturally, I was their enemy. I found myself with my hand very heavily bandaged, my feet bandaged. And they used to--

So I couldn't do anything. And they used to bring a tray of food and put it next to me at the table and walk out. So actually, if not the little girls of our Frau Tamm, I would have died of hunger, because the older one used to feed me.

And it was no good complaining, because the whole-- it was a very electrified situation, because the Poles knew that that's the end. The Germans knew that that's the end. And it was a very funny atmosphere in the hospital.

And then it came the day when-- I don't know how you call the sister in charge, the matron, arrived, and she read a list. And she said that Frau Tamm's children and myself are on the list to be evacuated next morning. We didn't know where or what, but we knew that we were going by boat.

And Frau Tamm cried very bitterly because both of us were in pain, and I had very high temperature. And she took me as an excuse. She said, look at her. She's got a very high temperature. Can't you leave us with the next transport?

And with authority she said, no, you are on the list, and that is that. Tomorrow morning, you are going to be evacuated.

Were you able to walk? Were you able to walk at this stage?

No, not at all. And neither was she able to walk or her little girls, which were already-- but we have been separated. I never saw her again. And all I remember, that the ambulance came. They took me on a stretcher. They carried the stretcher to the boat, which was a cruiser, The Deutschland. It was one of the very few left.

And basically, they used it to evacuate army. And as described in Odessa File, in the book, a lot of SS from the Baltics, they evacuated with The Deutschland. And they also took some civilians, because I found myself in a very big hall, which they cleared of tables or anything. And they put everybody on the floor, and it was about 90% was army soldiers.

I couldn't even look properly what kind of army, who they were. And amongst them some civilians which they brought.

Marsha, you were just telling me that you'd been put onto this boat, The Deutschland, and you didn't have any idea where you were going.

No, actually nobody knew because they didn't disclose it and didn't tell. Everybody was speculating because they used to send at the end quite a lot to Denmark, which was still German-occupied. But the majority have been all moaning and groaning because there have been all people who have been injured or ill.

And it was also the boat was torpedoed the whole time. You could hear it underneath, zooming, but luckily it didn't hit. And it was already Russian torpedoes because the Baltic Sea was already occupied by the Russians.

And I even lost count how many days we've been on the boat, because it was like one long nightmare. Because we weren't even fed, because it was impossible. It was nobody in attendance, just people lying on the floor and moaning.

And then the boat stopped mid-sea. I don't know whether they took off everybody off the boat. I don't think so. Because when we've been brought in the mainland, there have been only civilians. Nobody from the soldiers was with us.

And some officers, Navy officers, came to the civilians. We were all being put in one corner, and they said that they are going-- as the boat is a cruiser and cannot come near the harbor, they'll move us to small boats. And from there, they'll bring us to the harbor.

And we were told that we are outside the Island RAAgen. I had an officer of the Navy, very properly dressed in uniform. And he told me that he'll take me piggyback. And if I couldn't hold him properly because I didn't have fingers or my hands were bandaged, I should cross my arms very tightly, because the gang, the step--

That you were on.

Yes, which was provisionally put, icy, and if I can pray, I should pray. Because if we fall into the sea, we haven't got a chance because it's ice. And I put my arms around his neck, and very slowly he lowered me down to a small boat.

I don't remember how it looked from the outside, but I remember clearly inside the cabin because it looked very much like a home. It was somebody's private boat, and it had very lovely floral curtains and pictures. And it had all sorts of sayings like "home sweet home," and parts of songs all framed on the wall, very warm.

And I was put with a stretcher on-- it wasn't a bed, but it was like a canopy. And they brought soup, and it was green pea soup, very thick one. It's a national German dish. It is Erbsensuppe. And it was steaming hot, and it was the first time that something clicked.

I had a reaction, and I know that I started screaming. But I don't remember anything else. I think they gave me an injection to stop it.

Why did you have this reaction?

Because it was very much like a home. It didn't look like a boat or anything. It looked very much like a home, a cozy home. The room was very cozy. I awoke next morning or afternoon. I don't know. But when I awoke, I found myself in a very narrow cabin.

It was very austere. It was just like a railway bed, a little table. And on the wall, there was a bell. I remember clearly I couldn't do it with my hand, but I put my elbow, and I squeezed the bell, and I didn't let go.

And a nurse ran in, screaming that she'll hit me if I won't release the bell. And she told me that I'm in a hospital boat and that very soon we will be taken to the mainland. And we've been taken also in a funny way, because it was also far from the harbor, with cranes. They put us in a net with the stretcher in a net, and the crane put us over the other side to the harbor.

So from The Deutschland, you were transferred to a small boat.

From the small boat. I don't know how because I was unconscious. And--

From the small boat to a hospital--

To a hospital boat.

And then lifted by crane from the hospital boat--

To the harbor, to the mainland.

Of RAAgen.

RAAgen. And that was the harbor was Sassnitz.

Were you frightened?

No.

What happened?

It's a beautiful-- it's a beautiful Island, about 60 kvadratkilometer. And it was like a place like South of France for Germany. Because all the people who had money or were somebody had villas there, and all the fashion parades were in Sassnitz. And also a train, the ferry to Sweden used to go through RÃ¼gen.

And the language they speak is not pure German. It's very mixed with English. It's more like a Scandinavian language, also basic German. And I think it belonged to Denmark a long time ago. And it was all automatically from-- on the harbor, there was a train, again a cattle truck, because they had to put us with stretchers. And we went to the mainland city, which was Bergen, Bergen auf RÃ¼gen.

Because the main hospital was there. But the hospital was full, and we were taken to barracks in the garden. It was beautiful gardens. And I found myself with about 30 to 40 German women in barracks, in a long hall with two rows of beds, both sides.

Very-- it wasn't luxury, but terribly clean. It was very well appointed. And the hospital was a party hospital. The nurses all belonged to the party. It was Nationalsozialistischer Frauenverein.

It now belonged to the National Socialists?

Yes.

Were they Germans?

Yes, yes. But they called even the brown sisters. The uniform was brown.

How did you react to this fact?

I didn't react at all because I had no choice in the matter, and it was the choice was by the government or whoever organized the evacuation, and they didn't ask you any question whether you like it or not. It was a fact that they brought us there. That was that. You had to accept it.

Were you using your own name?

No. My name I gave already in Gdynia as Anna Marie Pfeiffer.

What made you choose that for your name?

Mummy was Anna, and Marie, actually. So both names together, Anna Marie is a very German name. And Pfeiffer, we had a SS guard from Prussia, that was from Prussia. I used this name

Marsha Segall, reel eight. Marsha, you were telling me how you've been taken to the barracks at Bergen on the Island of RÃ¼gen and how you were using an assumed name, Anna Marie Pfeiffer. Can you tell me what happened whilst you were staying at the barracks and how long you stayed there?

Sure. I just mentioned that the secretary of the hospital came to take particulars and register every one of us. And I was near the window, so I was already one of the last. When I heard the questions, that is the first time that I was afraid, because she asked all sorts of questions which I didn't have an answer.

She asked what labor permit or registration you had, what kind of cards did you have, which I didn't even know they exist or what they are. And also we slept-- the beds were put very near each other, but I couldn't ask somebody what kind of cards did we have.

And I thought, well, that's my last night, because I had no answers. And when she came to me, she had already asked

about 20 women all these particulars. And she asked my name. That was easy. I said Anna Marie Pfeiffer. She asked which town.

I said, Strassburg Westpreussen, because we passed by train once when we'd been taken from one camp to another. And so I knew of this existence, and the street I was quite safe to say Market Strasse 4, because like Church Street in England, there is everywhere in Germany a Market Strasse.

And in any case, they couldn't check because it was already occupied by Russians. Russia was occupying. But when she started asking the other questions, my only defense was I started moaning. And the women in the barrack have been very kind at this particular moment. They told the secretary, can't you leave her alone? You see that she is in pain.

And she closed the book, and she walked away. But I thought she'll definitely come next morning to ask the other questions. But I was lucky. She never did. She just left it.

And then I used to slowly-- actually, I got to know what we were supposed to have because we used to speak among ourselves the whole time, because everybody told their sad story how they came to RÃ¼gen.

Did the other women who were German know then that you were Jewish?

No. No. It would have been a disaster. Because I mean, I remember some names of the sisters. It was Schwester Irena, which her father was a Gauleiter in Poland.

What's a Gauleiter?

Gauleiter in Poland. He was in charge of a whole district, and she had lots of looted things on, which he sent her from Poland. And Schwester Erika, I don't know, but they all have been party members. So was the chief doctor in charge of the hospital, Dr. Seiffert. He used to come once a week to check and to inquire and to see how everything is run.

And we had a orthopedic surgeon, a Czech doctor, which was sent to RÃ¼gen forcefully. I mean, it wasn't a choice. She was sent from Prague to RÃ¼gen, Dr. Manek. And she could speak German very little, very broken German. But she instinctively, I discovered it later at the end, knew that I wasn't German. She didn't know that I was Jewish, but she knew that I wasn't German, and that is a very funny occurrence because I met also in-- when we've been in hiding, I didn't mention it because it would make it too long.

But when we've been in hiding, we met some other people who've been in hiding. And

Also nobody said anything. You had like a sixth sense. You knew that they're not what they are saying they are. And as she wasn't a German, didn't like them, and was sent forcefully, she had the same instinct.

And what it manifested was that actually she saved my these three fingers, because they've been soft like pulp. And she puts them on special sticks, and she tried to save it, which she did. I mean, they're stiff, but they're there. They're here.

And it was terribly painful, but she told me it's worthwhile, and she never let a nurse to change my bandages. She did it always herself, and they used to think it's a joke, all the others. They used to tell me that the Manek is in love with me because she lets nobody touch me. At the time, I didn't know the reason, but she had a reason.

What exactly had you had amputated by this time?

Yes. They left these three fingers. They thought it may-- actually, what they did was a marvelous job. So you have saved everything possible.

You have three fingers and a thumb on your right hand with one finger--

On my left hand.

Your left hand.

And just the thumb on the right hand.

What about your feet?

I had-- I had all toes amputated on the left foot, but half-- and the left foot-- the right foot everything. And I had also underneath I have wounds, which--

You have wounds on your--

Have great wounds till today. They are open or closed. And now it also developed on the right foot, and the heels are very sensitive because it was frostbitten. So I have to wear special light shoes. They shouldn't rub. And I can't go barefoot with shoes without a [? car, ?] which is impossible. And sometimes when I walk more, it creates hard skin, and I can't walk at all because it's painful, actually. I walk on one.

But I had on the right foot left three toes, that haven't been nice, crooked, but that which was amputated in England in '55, and that was a disaster. It shouldn't have been touched.

They did everything they could. Because in a way, I was lucky that the amputations were done in Germany to a German. Because some who had frostbite like me, and who did survive, very few have been liberated by the Russian troops. Later on in January, they have been amputated completely, their whole arms. Because I had it black on my arms as well. They did cure.

Because they thought you were a German, and they were German.

Yes, they cured. I mean, they did everything possible to save. And the others who did liberated by the Russians had lost their arms, everything, because they didn't cure. They just amputated wherever it was black. They didn't have facilities, especially not in Germany.

How long did you stay in this barracks at RÄ¼gen?

Oh, I came in February, and I stayed till, I think, the end of June. I can check because I have got the certificate from the hospital.

Did you know what was happening?

I didn't know. I did, and I didn't. And it was, for me, a terribly trying time, because I was terribly afraid to dream, or I was frightened if I speak at night. And also very often I used to forget my name. And all the others, who were much older than I was, used to tell me that I shouldn't be ashamed and tell the chief surgeon who used to come once a week that I'm also deaf, that I can't hear well.

Because they used to call me Anna Marie, Anna Marie, and I didn't reply. So they put it they put it to deafness, that I'm deaf. I also had got a disease which you get in the North Sea, which is like-- they call it North Sea disease.

North Sea?

North Sea disease, which you get. Not a rash, but you itch on your whole body. And as they couldn't put my hands and feet in anything, they actually dipped me, hold my hand and feet and dipped me in sulfur.

Was it like scurvy?

I don't know because I didn't have any marks, nothing at all. But it was itchy, the whole body. And the only thing I did



is they made me a special stand, and I used to read a lot. And I was fed very well. And we had all sorts of experience in RÅ¼gen.

At one stage, they came and they checked everybody's hands. Well, they couldn't mine because I was bandaged, and they knew I couldn't have done it. I couldn't get out of bed. But the doctor apparently, the chief who lived on the premises, had geese. And they had been all painted blue.

There is a special medicine which they used to tint sore throats, which is in a university city, Greifswald. It is like Heidelberg. It's two very famous university cities in Germany. One is Heidelberg, and one is Greifswald. And the blue was called Greifswalder blue, and somebody painted all the geese with this because you can't wash it.

And they thought that it was sabotage. And they checked everybody, and they checked the Czech doctor. It was the whole commotion. The other was when they brought young boys. Because at the end of the war, they took in the army 12 to 14 years old boys, German. And they told them how to fight Russian tanks, because the Russians were advancing from one side, and the British Army from the other side.

And nobody knew who will come quicker because RÅ¼gen was connected with the mainland with a big bridge, which the railway lines were. And they were frightened, the boys, because they had no guns, nothing. They have been children. And they ran. Some of them were so frightened that they tried to run. And one was brought in our barrack.

He was locked in a room, in a separate room. And what he did, he opened all the taps. And he nearly drowned us all, but luckily somebody came in at night and saw it full of water. But in a way, he was the lucky one, because three of them they hung publicly as a sample. And the funny part was that all our nurses went to see the public hanging. It was in an open space in the middle of town. I never saw Bergen properly.

And one of the patients who could walk, they put her in charge because about 5 o'clock we used to have a high tea she would dish out for everybody to pour the coffee. And they used to bring a big basket with sandwiches with lots of smoked fish, because it was an island and had lovely fish. And they all went to see and then described us when they came back how it was that they were hanged, three of them, and a big placard written "I was a coward to fight." And they were dangling for three days.

I mean, they've been cruel to each other. And they also had all sorts of training for old people in the gardens of the hospital to fight the Russians. I also forgot to tell you that when The Deutschland went back to Gdynia, and that is the time we asked to be evacuated with the second sailing. They also had it full of people, and they came back to Sassnitz, and it was the only bombardment the Island had in six years of war. And it was a pocket cruiser. It was sunk.

And it was one survivor, a Polish woman. She was with a child. The child died. And she had a shrapnel between the two veins, which is unbelievable. And also she was Polish. She was told she was Polish. She was in the same room with all of us Germans.

So had you been left to go on the journey later, you would have--

I wouldn't have been alive.

No.

That's what made me know I'm a fatalist. It's true. I don't think you can choose. That's why I'm never afraid of flying or anything. But I've got a picture of the Polish woman. It's remarkable that they put her with us, because there was another room in the same barracks, which we were told are Polish workers which they sent to Germany compulsory. And they had an armband with a "P" for Poland.

Because when they fed me, they used to tell me that the leftovers they are giving to the Polish women, and I should eat more because I was terribly undernourished and underweight. And when the bombardment was in Sassnitz, when the boats were sunk, it was tremendous, because the island is very small and it was like daylight in Bergen. And we could

hear it very clearly, and the bombardment looked like next door.

And we had one woman in our barrack who was from the island. She wasn't a refugee. And she hurt a nerve in her hand by embroidering. And her hand became stiff, and she had been operated, and she couldn't get a room in the main hospital, so she came with us.

And when it was a bombardment, she kept on saying, I bet you if it will be one survivor, it will be the Anna Marie, because she thought I have no right to live, really, because I have got so badly frostbitten. I remember it clearly, because she was really nasty about it. She thought that we will all perish, that the bombardment will be in Bergen, and I'll be the sole survivor, and I had no right to live really. That was Germans among themselves.

And nearer the end, you used to hear all sorts of rumors. You asked me whether we knew-- whether I knew what's happening. The papers wrote always about this secret weapon, but it was less and less as the time went by. We didn't know that Vienna was already occupied. We didn't know any-- they didn't write about any details, what was already taken by the Russians, mainly Russians and by the Allies.

And they hoped against hope. But at the end, they were already reconciled that they're going to be occupied. But their great wish was not by the Russians. The Russians were called "Ivan," the British "Tommy," and the Americans "Ami."

So they wanted to be at least occupied by the Tommies, not by the Ivans. They've been petrified to be occupied by Russians. I think in a way because they knew exactly how they behaved there, and they were frightened for revenge.

They knew how the Germans had treated the Russians.

Treated the Russians, and they have been-- absolutely, it was like a boogie word, Ivan. We had funny-- we had funny occurrences. Like we were woken one night by our night nurse. And she said she had the most marvelous news. On the radio she was listening that the Allies made a peace agreement with the remnants of the German army, and they're all attacking Russia.

Well, I was horrified. I thought another war? And she was so pleased that we all were given a bonus food, sort of a porridge. But it was wishful thinking because they were already busy how to save themselves. They really, honestly, thought that they will be-- Germany will be punished very severely. But they thought it would.

And the way that the Germans were concerned about what the Russians might do to them because of what they'd done earlier in the war to the Russians, were they also concerned about the way they treated the Jews?

Yes, very much so. Because I was like a confidant to lots of people. And first of all, I knew very well German literature and general knowledge, and they always used to come and ask me things. And some of them could already walk, because it's been a long time in the hospital. I mean, I've been with them from February. I'm taking the space till the Russians occupied the island was about three months. And we got to know each other rather well.

And you could already tell who is who, different people and different characters, lying in bed with so many people the whole time. There was also a woman from Berlin and her husband. You could see he was not a Nazi. Because whenever he used to come in, and they used to tell him-- don't remember his name. Let's say Herr Schmidt.

They used to say, Heil Hitler, Herr Schmidt. He always used to answer, good morning, Schwester Erika. Never ever answered with the Heil Hitler. Afterwards he told me that he was a physiotherapist in sanatoriums in Berlin. He was an older man, and he treated Russian writers like Gorky and all sorts of personalities.

He wasn't a Nazi, but that was a rarity, especially in this hospital, in which they all have been Nazis. And I had a lot of women who used to sit on my bed and showed me pictures of sons who had been in SS uniforms and husband who had been in SS uniforms, and they had been terribly worried what will happen to them, what I think will happen.

Well, I didn't have great ideas. I always used to leave the question open. And I thought it was an irony that they ask me

what will happen to the SS. And some came from Königsberg, which was the biggest town in Prussia. It was actually the capital of nuclear Germany, of the nucleus of Germany, which unified Germany, Bismarck.

And they used to tell me that, why did they have to deport the Jews from Königsberg. They had been friends, and what did they do to them, and why did they kill them. They knew what happened, obviously. Because if you live with neighbors and they disappear in the middle of the night and nobody ever heard from them all these years.

Because-- I mentioned it because after the war was the great silence that somehow nobody knew. They did. They knew about concentration camps. They used to call it KZ. And they knew. They knew everything. And they have been very worried what will happen to them.

And actually, the liberation, from all points of view, was a relief because nobody did anything to them, not really.

Were they in agreement with what had happened to the Jews?

Not at the end. They might have in the beginning. But at the end, they used to feel that it was something which was terrible. And they didn't know why it was done, but it's a normal reaction. Because when everything went well, and when they benefited from loot, all of them, they've been quite happy. But at the end of the war, I mean, Germany was severely bombed, and their life wasn't as pleasant as before. You start thinking why you did it.

Well, we've been in this hospital till the 2nd of May in the morning. As I mentioned before, my bed was near the window. I have seen Russians. And to me, it was also a revelation because their uniform changed. And as I didn't have news for such a long time, I thought perhaps there is a revolution in Russia because they look differently.

In what way?

Well, because when they occupied Lithuania, they used to rip the braid and the epaulets from our police and army, and they all have been the same, soldiers and officers. It was all comrade soldier, comrade officer, and that changed, because they had the golden braid and lots of medals. And when you called them comrade officer, he said sorry, I'm officer this and that.

They had different canteens for soldiers and officers, which was something new. They had a different hymn. I mean, it wasn't the "International," which we knew in 1940, that it was a national hymn for the great Russian people, which they have it today too. It's not the "International," but to me it was everything new. I didn't know what it is.

What happened when the Russians came?

Nothing. I was terribly excited when I saw it, when I saw them because that was the first evidence that the war is over where I was concerned. And I tried to tell it to Dr. Manek because she was a Czech. She wasn't a Nazi. She wasn't German.

And I told her-- I was stuttering from excitement, and it was very difficult for me to tell it. Actually, nobody listened. She came up to me, and I said, I want to tell you something.

She says, I know. In her broken German she said it-- "I know. Sie nicht Deutsch." "You're not German." And she also told me that I should not try to get in touch with the Russians as long as I'm in bed because they don't help much, because there are quite a few Czechs, and they want a transport to go back to Czechoslovakia, and they weren't helpful at all, and they don't think I would benefit in any way. She said, when you'll be able to walk a bit, then you can go to the kommandantur.

The only thing was that at that time I told the chief of the hospital that I was not a German, and he started guessing. Before I said anything, he said, what are you, French, Hungarian? And he started naming all nationalities in Europe, and I said no, but you are concerned much worse-- I'm Jewish. And then he got completely pale, not that he saved me. He wasn't concerned, but he was frightened that I will do something to him.

And the whole attitude of the people changed. They've been terribly careful what they've been saying.