

Mr. Zwirek, reel five.

I was going to say, when we arrived in Schlieben from Buchenwald, I meant to say before, and I didn't say it, you remember I mentioned to you my finger was getting septic, and I was frightened to show it in Buchenwald.

Yes.

I was frightened because I thought I wouldn't be good for work, they might shoot me. So when I was already in Schlieben, after about a few weeks, my hand started swelling up. And afterwards my arm swelled up. And I was getting very worried. And people said, it's no good. You must go. The finger or the thumb or the nail will have to come off.

So there was a doctor, a Dutch doctor. I remember like now because, unfortunately, the Dutch doctor died of typhoid later on. I went into him. He had to look. He was shocked. He said, all your arm is full of poison. I have to squeeze it all out. It's exactly the same thing. I have to take that nail off. I have to pull it off.

I have got no medical assistant or any drops or anything to help you to calm the pain. The only thing is that I'm going to squeeze out all this. Turn around. I've got a pair of special pliers. The thumb, the nail is different since then. I have to pull it off. I said go ahead.

I turned around. I didn't look. And he gave a pull. Because it was all septic, he had to pull it off. And then he squeezed it all out. He put my arm in a sling. And he said, you won't be able to work with this for at least two weeks.

But luckily Schlieben was like a new camp. And I worked for this [? doctor, ?] and explained the situation. And he says, don't worry. We'll overcome that. You'll be all right here. You can use one hand in the meantime. And I managed to do for about two weeks or three weeks just with one hand. And he saved my life most probably, that doctor.

And those were episodes that was unbelievable. One had to go through and one did go through because if you didn't help yourself, nobody helped you.

You must have been in agony when he pulled it off.

Terrible agony. But I'll tell you, when you suffer a lot and you know it's a matter of life and death, you see-- a matter of life and death. I mean, since that time that nail never goes properly. But I was-- I was pleased that he's done it and knew it-- another hurdle passed.

And it was 1944. It was nearly the end of 1944. We already had ideas that the war is coming to an end.

How did you know?

Well, the first time I heard Allies landed in France, about two months later one of our chaps was working also outside the camp. And he managed to get hold of a paper, a German paper, newspaper. It was two months old. And he brought it in the camp. And we used to read German. I don't read it know so much good, but I used to.

And there were some hints, that apparently how they are resisting and about Allies landed in Normandy, you know, that sort of things. So we knew it must be coming. And we knew the Russians approached already near Warsaw. We knew as well. So we knew the war was going to come to an end. Only trouble is, will we survive?

So we went to-- we went from there-- we were quite a long time in that Schlieben. And it was being bombed and harassed. And then one day there was-- we still think the Italians done it. It was sabotaged, the whole factory. The middle of the night was a big explosion. We think the Italians have done it. And some people got killed as well, some inmates as well. But unfortunately, we were prepared for that. We were looking forward.

One day I was sitting on the roof, repairing there. And I saw a British plane, a fighter plane, going right through quick.

And I said to my mates, oh, it's going to be an air raid soon. We knew it already, once we saw one plane coming through. It was just a fighter plane come through just to look out where to bomb. And we knew within a quarter of an hour, the heavy planes would come along, which it did.

And they just kept dropping bombs indiscriminately and machine gunning as well because I couldn't distinguish who were German troops or who were inmates. But we didn't mind. We were ready to sacrifice, a lot of us, as long as some of us should survive.

Were there any reprisals for the act of sabotage?

Not among us, us inmates. I think they didn't believe it was sabotage. But we knew. We knew very well. They thought it was something went uncorrected, that because we were working together with the Italians, and there were Italian prison for, that it was definitely sabotage. But I don't think the Germans could prove it as such, especially at that time of the war. They were eager to have the factory going quick. And to them was no trouble.

Within two or three weeks, it was rebuilt and working again, producing again.

This was a Panzerfaust factory.

Yeah. Yeah. To them it was no trouble.

What did you know about the plans for sabotage?

Well, we heard rumors in our camp that the Italian sabotaged it. That's what we heard rumors. They knew that we-- the Germans I think knew we wouldn't do it because we couldn't lay our hand on any powder and all these sort of things because we were not allowed to-- too far to go. We're only allowed to be by our machines and do this work and so on. And so we worked.

And another thing, us inmates, one week or two weeks or a month, I could work on the roof repairing [INAUDIBLE] for the railway line. Then I could work in this factory. Then all of a sudden, say no, go back. Work in building trade. They just shifted around wherever it suits them.

But it was all a matter, of course, the way they wanted. And we only knew that most of our families and our neighbors and all that were taken, once they were taken on the trains to go east, that they went straight to crematoriums. And we wanted to avoid that.

You said that the commandant of Schlieben was not so bad.

Not so bad considering to compare it to what I have seen before.

How did that show itself?

How it showed itself, he was-- he didn't walk around like some other SS men, with a whip and just hitting and shooting indiscriminately. He didn't. He wanted discipline. He wanted order. And he left it to that if you gave it to him. So he didn't interfere.

But why the others, junior to him, could come in and just take out the gun and shoot one or two. Not a-- he wouldn't raise a hair. Or take the whip and just chase you and hit you, but he didn't. You just, you worked. All right, carry on working. And he wanted it done like that.

I should imagine he was one of the old disciplinarian Germans. He got the job to see this should be done and this should be done. And he wanted the inmates to do it. And that was what he was concerned. He wasn't concerned in just taking people and execute them for no reason. You see?

Everybody had their own power in Germans. Nobody knew. And if they went out, any junior German went out and shoot a few Jews, there was nothing said. He wasn't told off or demoted for it. He was promoted. He was a good Nazi. But some of them just kept to the rule. They are responsible for this camp, and they do it.

And then it was-- eventually this camp was closed. The Allies were beginning to push near.

When would this have been?

This would have been-- no-- oh, yes, the beginning of March of '45. We were all guarded again, taken by train. Now, that was also tragic. We were packed in each train, about 70 of us. They were carriages, you know, cattle carriages.

In the middle, where the doors are-- in the carriages, each side is a big door-- the two German SS men were sleeping there. It was their quarters. Like that was a couch here in the middle. That part was for the two Germans to sleep and--

In the central part?

In the central part. And we were there.

On either side.

On either side. And they made the bunk on top as well. You couldn't sit. You couldn't lay down. There was no room to lay down. And we were traveling in these trains. And it was-- the conditions were shocking. Every morning we had to pull out dead people. So they hitched on another carriage at the end. And all dead people used to throw in there, in the back carriage.

To throw in what?

The dead corpses.

Dead corpses?

Yeah.

What were they dying of?

Everything-- of hunger, cold, disease. They were just dying, every day. And naturally, when it came to the evening, night time, the Germans, after they washed themselves and all this, they wanted to go to sleep. The noise we were making from a lot of people that were hungry, they were-- they were in pain. They couldn't sleep. They were getting wild, the SS men. He just went in and just hit and kicked everybody, just murdered them.

He said, I'm going to have peace, and I'm going to sleep. And if anybody makes a whimper, I'll take him out and shoot him. And we had to persevere. The conditions were atrocious.

Once a day, if the train stopped, they managed to get a loaf of bread. Well, we were lucky if we got a slice of bread each in 24 hours or 48 hours, whenever they managed. Eventually we traveled for over two weeks.

We didn't know where we were going. They took us into Czechoslovakia, near Prague, a town called Terezin.

Theresienstadt?

Yeah, Theresienstadt or Terezin. Yeah. Theresienstadt is in German. In Czech, it's Terezin. That is in Czechoslovakia.

Yeah, I see.

When we came there, after I suffered all these years, they told us, right, get off the train. We got off the train. As I got off, I collapsed. And I thought, goodness me, I've survived so many years, I'm going to give in now. Anyway, I had typhoid, so I just collapsed.

So I remember being put on a stretcher, whatever. Anyway, I was taken away. They took me up somewhere on a loft. I didn't know it then. I only knew it 24 hours later, when I woke up. I was lying there. I woke up, said, where am I?

And some prisoner nearby said, oh, this is like a hospital. You collapsed yesterday. They brought you up here. You were unconscious for all night. And we just had a roll and some coffee.

And the thought of food somehow must have revived me. So what do you mean you had a roll and coffee? Where's mine? Anyway, I managed. I set up, and I saw a nurse and a doctor in white coat come over to me. And they took my pulse or whatever.

And then I said, I'm hungry. He said, OK, you'll get something to eat. This place was a showpiece ghetto the German made years before. They kept mainly German and Austrian Jews and Czechs. And the Red Cross was allowed, from Switzerland, to come in there now and again. And they supplied them with some special food and so forth.

And of course, when they brought all of us in, all these Polish or Hungarian Jews in, at the end it swelled to such a state they couldn't cope even. But I was still there. I was still very lucky. But I was interned in isolated building, in an isolated building because they didn't know, like, what disease I have or whatever. And I was not allowed to go out.

And I was there all the time. And every day I managed to get a piece of bread or drop a soup. And little did I know that the war will end soon. But I was there right up till I was liberated. That was-- and I wasn't liberated till very late, 9th of May, the last day of the war. Berlin was already liberated, but Prague wasn't. Prague was the 9th of May. I was liberated the same day, on the 9th of May.

Can you describe what the liberation was like?

It was unbelievable. I remember it was-- it was like in the evening. All of a sudden, somebody said, I think we are liberated. And we rushed to the fence. There were a great big, afterwards, doors. We just opened the door. We rushed out. And we didn't see any Germans.

During the day, Germans were running away, and they were shooting inside the camp, just shooting as they were getting on the lorries to run away. We rushed out, and we saw Russian troops coming with tanks and all heavy armament. And we stopped them, really, really stopped them going. And they pleaded with us, don't stop us. We must liberate Prague. The Germans are killing all civilians that they see.

And we begged them for food. And I will say, they were very-- they threw down all the food they had. I remember like now, they threw down chocolate and dried prunes and various fruit and biscuits and all that. And we were just starving. We grabbed it all.

And the jubilation is just unbelievable. We jumped on their tanks. They could see that they had to do here with people that they came from prison. So they tried to be tactful with us. But naturally, they had to keep some discipline as well.

The whole night, naturally we didn't sleep. We were rejoicing. And next day we were going out to try and get mainly food and clothes, because our clothes were in tatters. And food, we needed very badly. I remember people were eating so much food. I would say about a third of the people who survived died in the first four weeks after the war from overeating suddenly because I had nearly the same experience.

I went out, and I got hold of a big tin, American 2 pounds corned beef. It was a tent-- didn't have an opener. And I was so hungry for food, like you see an animal in a cage with their teeth. I smashed it against a rock. And I just smashed it. I took a spoon, and I ate the whole tin, just sitting down in the corner, nobody should grab it from me. I thought, you know, I'm still in camp. Somebody will see me eating, grab it from me.

I was ill for the next two weeks. And when this was finished-- I finished with this typhoid, I finished with this illness. Then I got the mumps. And both my age-- and a Russian medical officer came in to treat me. And he said, keep away from any other people. But it was impossible. So I had to be isolated again for about a week with the mumps.
[LAUGHS]

Did you get some treatment from him?

Yes. He gave me-- it wasn't much to do. He said, look, took my temperature. Oh, yes, and he gave me something. And he said, look, you can't-- don't go out. You'll be a bit sore for a few days. And in fact, I think he seen me a couple of times. You know, he told me, it's not dangerous. It's just-- maybe after all this, I can-- but I managed to survive this as well, thank God.

When you went into the isolation part, when you first went into Theresienstadt, did you get any treatment for the typhoid?

Not at all, nothing, nothing at all, just lay there. And when I felt a bit better, you know-- I think most of us, somehow with all these typhoids, with all these fevers that we had, we somehow were immune and strengthened by that. We were lying there. Somebody gave us something to eat. And from day to day you felt a little bit better. And then you got up.

Some survived, some didn't. Some of us didn't. Some of them died from it. We were lying next to them. Some of them died, didn't make it. But you didn't get any treatment whatsoever. There was no treatment as such.

So all the people you were with had typhoid, did they?

Yes. Typhoid and maybe some other disease, which I can't recollect now. But everybody who had typhoid or had scarlet fever or anything, right away they isolated. They didn't want them to mix with the others. That's the only thing they could, just contain it. So some survived and some didn't. And that is how life went on.

But you were conscious already. Even though you were weak, you were conscious what's happening. The first few days were not like one day. I was unconscious. But as soon as your consciousness came back to you, you knew one thing, well, you've got to battle now and try and survive.

But we couldn't get out of the room, you see? Where the others could go out, we couldn't get out.

When Theresienstadt was liberated, was there any revenge taken on the Germans?

Any Germans that we could lay our hand on, we tried to. But there weren't many. But now and again we caught a German. But authorities didn't allow to take revenge by ourself. They said, no. If he was an SS man, you give him up to us. We'll see to him.

Who said that?

The Russian authorities. They didn't allow us to go out and shoot as such. They allowed us the first three days, I believe, when the Americans-- wherever they liberated, they did the same. The first three days, they said, you can go out to any German house and take whatever food and clothes you want. But you mustn't take the law in your own hand to start shooting.

I mean, one day we did catch a German, an SS man. He was in-- he was in civilian clothes, and we recognized him. And about six of us started beating him. And there were two Russian soldiers. They jumped in, and they separated. They said, no. Leave it with us. We'll deal with him. But they allowed us to go get some food and all that sort of things.

Now, did you ever learn about the fate of your mother and father?

Yes. My father was also in camp. He survived the war. Unfortunately, he died in Germany soon afterwards, 1948.

This is Auschwitz camp?

No, no, no, in Germany. He died in 1948 after the war. He was living in Germany.

What did you say though?

My father was also in the-- he was in Buchenwald and in Schlieben. And then I don't know. And then-- he survived. I came to this country, and I was going to bring him over here. But he died in Germany in 1948.

In a road accident, you said.

Yes. My mother died in Treblinka. That day when we were sent out from Suchedniow, she died the next day in Treblinka in the gas chambers.

How did you find out about that?

Oh, this I know 100% because, where we lived with these people in Suchedniow, there was also a mother and two sons. Very, very strong, tall chaps they were. They were on the same carriage as my mother was, being sent to Treblinka. And when they came to Treblinka, they always used to take, when a train with inmates came, they used to pick out about 50 or-- 40 or 50 healthy young men to do the dirty work. And he was one amongst them, like our landlady's son.

And they used to keep them there for about three weeks or four weeks. And they used to execute them as well. And they'd pick out fresh ones as the trains rolled in. They did the same in Auschwitz as well and did in Treblinka.

After about two weeks working there, he decided, he and another chap, they would escape, which they did. And they came back to Skarzysko, where we were. We knew them very well. And he told us all the story.

And they said, you know, I was in same carriage with your mother, which I knew because when I worked in Skarzysko on the lines, on the railway lines, I saw the carriage there with my mother and him in there. And he called out to me, oh, your mother is in here. And he told us what was happening.

And he told us-- that time was 1941 or '42. And we didn't really believe hers because, I'll tell you, you just couldn't believe. That was 1942. You couldn't believe. And he explained to us detail, from A to Z, what happened the minute the people came into Treblinka, as soon as they were chased off the carriages, very quick. You know, they were sadists. They were always with dogs and whips. And they said right, women and children on one side, men on one side.

And from the men they picked out so and so, and they asked them also to go and undress, push them in into this crematorium. He explained to us everything. And they were dead within minutes. And everything was taken away, their clothes and their gold teeth, and everything pulled out.

And naturally, he accumulated, himself, quite a bit of gold. And he managed to get out, bribe some of the Poles there. And he came back, and he told us this story. It was heartbreaking. That was in 1942. And I had to live with it all these years. And just shut it out of my--

Mr. Zwirek, reel six. I think you were saying that your sister also survived.

Yes. I heard my sister survived while I was already in this country, in England. I didn't know that she had survived. And I got the letter through the Red Cross society that my sister was in Dachau. And she survived, and she's in Germany.

And eventually, in 1948, I went to Germany to see her. And she is now happily living in America. Last time before that, I saw my sister 1942, I believe, or '43. And I haven't seen it since 1948, till I went to Germany to see her when I heard she survived.

But at least it was nice to know I had my sister.

Now, if I can ask you about Buchenwald--

Yeah.

I think you were only there six weeks.

Something like that, yeah.

But was that the-- from what you've said, was that one of the best camps you were in?

Yes, as such that would be because there were so many people there. And when you got in there, you got your number. I've still got my number-- 68,217. I remember it.

That was your Buchenwald number, was it?

Yes. And that was a big camp. And that was like a distribution camp. They sent to all the concentration camps inmates, where they were needed.

Was that the reason why it was a better camp, or were there any other reasons?

Well, I should imagine it was organized. That was a camp since before the war. The Germans had it, and they had it well organized in various ways, in various nationalities. And when a transport arrived there, they knew how to deal with it very efficient and quick. And they knew right away, right, you will be going out from this camp in four weeks, in two weeks, whenever the question allowed or so.

And I think-- I'm not sure, but I think they had more medical care for some inmates than anywhere else. But nevertheless, I was still frightened to submit that I have got something wrong with my thumb, my finger.

On the train journey to Buchenwald, you said that you didn't have any water for about a week.

That's right.

How did people survive?

That is why a lot of people died. And luckily, once or twice, it was raining very hard, and it was open carriages. It's like there must have been someone on top to look after us. Usually the trains were carriages, shut, locked. These were open carriages. And we managed to survive. And on the journey going, everybody carried with them a little tin or whatever of water, whatever we could.

You said that when you got to Buchenwald you were disinfected.

That's right.

Did you have lice?

Oh, terrible. We were all wearing the same clothes for so many months and months, unless we manage to get from somebody who died, so we took his clothes. But the lice was constantly with us all the time, in Skarzysko, the time, and then in Schlieben after a while, not in Buchenwald. You see, in Buchenwald they didn't allow it. In Buchenwald they kept an eye on it.

That's why I wasn't long in Buchenwald. I was only six weeks. But they had big showers in Buchenwald, and plenty of

them. And they made sure everybody had a shower with disinfectant. But in all other camps, they had no hot water at all, always cold water.

And I wore the same gear that they gave me in Buchenwald all the time I was in Schlieben, right into Theresienstadt. I didn't have any other clothes. The lice were full, in the bed and in your clothes.

How did people behave towards each other? Was it every man for himself, or did people help each other?

People helped each other. There's no question about it. Everybody lived for themselves, but if one had enough food to help another one, he would help. Like if I knew-- if I knew I got today lots of potatoes, so I help today that friend of mine. But because I knew I can get tomorrow some more potatoes. But I'm sure, if I knew that for the next week I wouldn't get any more potatoes, I wouldn't share it with him.

I would say, right, I must have one potato each day. But because I knew I would get some more, so we just shared it. Everybody tried to help one another. I saw people, and I done it myself, they were dying of typhoid, dying of hunger, and we're forced into them a bit of food. We knew it's theirs. We forced it. We wanted them to survive. It didn't help. Occasionally it didn't help, but we did.

And the other hand, I mean, you laugh of it now. I mean, if I tell you a story, you laugh of it. And this is a true story, as God gives the day. Because last year, after 40 years, I met up with a chap. He came from Toronto here. We were in camp together.

Somehow he got to know that I live in London. And I got a phone call, I should come and see him. And for a minute, I couldn't think who he was. When we were-- in Skarzysko, we were. So when he told me his name, I said, you had a brother. He was executed. He said, yes.

When it was a selection, when I told you, in Skarzysko, and his brother was picked out. He looked too weak. He couldn't work. And they were taken on the lorries to be executed. His brother, the one who survived, was pleading with the Germans. I'll look after him, all that. They just pushed him away.

They said, if you won't shut up, we'll take you as well. You know? And one day, the few inmates were taken on the lorry to be taken away for execution. And they had still this morning piece of bread in their pocket. We begged them, give it to me to eat. What good is it to you. You're going to be shot. You're going to be executed. Give it to me. We begged them. People were like animals. They wouldn't part with it.

And that same chap, I told you, his brother was taken away. He also had his piece of bread with him to the last minute. He was hoping he survived. And he didn't.

So I met up with his brother here. And we reminiscent all these stories. I said, I remember it like it was yesterday. You were running after the lorry. And he was on top of the lorry. And he was crying and shouting and nothing-- took him away, and that's it.

And the brother survived. He lives in Toronto. And married with children, and they came here. I was pleased to see him. [INAUDIBLE].

Did any particular age group survive better than other age groups?

Yes. Our age group survived best. The ones who were younger than about 12 or 13 didn't have such a good chance. [COUGHS] Excuse me. And maybe from 10 onwards, if they said they're a little bit older-- but you didn't have anybody surviving in 1945 who was 10 years old. I mean, you might have had a few that were hidden or whatever there is.

And over 55, you hardly found any surviving. The bulk was our age. If you were, when the war started, anything from 12 to about, let's say, 40, 45, you know when the war started, even 50-- if you were a young 50, could be another five or six years you could survive. My father survived, and he was, when the war finished, he was 53, 52, 53, when the war

finished.

It may seem a strange question to ask, but as far as your dreams were concerned, what did you dream of? Were they pleasant dreams or horrific dreams?

In Germany?

When you were in the camps.

In the camps, I don't think I dreamed a lot because I'm too alert to sleep so deep, much too alert because it used to be-- I didn't tell you half the stories. The middle of the night, they used to wake you up and just wanted to have some fun. Or all of a sudden they say, right, a train arrived with some coals, or potatoes, or bricks. And you have to go down and unload.

In camps I didn't-- I can't remember having dreams as such, but plenty of dreams and nightmares since I was liberated. Even now, even now I get plenty of nightmares and dream. And oh, from the camp, this does happen. But I can't recall there, no, I can't recall dreams.

Were you in a constant state of tiredness?

Always tired. But the funny thing is, when I come to look back at it, I think our nerve carried us and our will carried us because we were putting in-- putting in-- if you worked daytime, you started-- the appell was about 6 o'clock in the morning. And you were on your feet working all day, till about 6:00 or 7:00 in the evening. And then when you came home, they started counting again.

And by the time you got something to eat you-- and then in the middle of the night, you could have been woken up to do some work and vice versa. When I worked nighttime, I worked right from about 6:00 in the evening till about 8:00 in the morning, and working really hard. But we didn't give it a thought.

The will and nerves just carried you because, when we are unloading, let's say, a train of bags of cement, you know, and it just comes into 50 kilos. You know, they're very heavy. When they loaded up one on each shoulder, you know, it was loaded up. And the Germans were standing there.

They didn't want you to walk. They're whipping, you should run with it, run. I mean, when I come to-- I couldn't pick up one sack now. Those days, I pick up two.

What was the worst aspect? Was it the lack of food, or thirst, or cold, or the tiredness, or what?

Fear. The fear that any minute, any time you can lose your life. That was the worst aspect. That is why you gave no consideration to anything else. You had to be alert to survive. Survive was the main thing. And to survive you had to be lucky.

And I think luck played a great part because everywhere where I was and I survived, fate played a great part. First of all, we had to have extra food. If you didn't get extra food, if you relied on the food that they allocated for you, you did not survive. That is why the rate of deaths was that high, because those people-- I mean, you know very well there can only be so many people work near food or work in some places where it's near to get some food.

But the bulk don't get it. And those people who didn't get an extra little bit of food, whether it's one potatoes or a piece of bread a day extra, would not survive. There was no question of surviving because-- I remember, I was in Schlieben. And I came already from Buchenwald, and I was already there a few years in camp. And that was '44.

So I was working. Normally we were-- whatever we were doing with the digging and that. And they brought in a lot of German Jews and Hungarian Jews. And they looked still very well because Hungarian Jews were still living in their homes. They came straight from home. And they had bagfuls of food and chocolates, everything.

They didn't want to eat the food that we were getting. They said, I don't eat this rubbish. And they were working hard. The Germans were pleased with them, really rushing them. We took our pace already. And we said to them, you won't be able to work like this. You wait when your food goes out. What are you talking? We get extra food.

After two weeks, they were dying out like flies. They were not used to this kind. We already worked for years. We knew that we can work that fast and how hard. So we've paced ourselves accordingly. And they were trying to show us up, that we are not fast enough. And they were dying like flies-- terrible. I felt sorry for them.

Then afterwards, they realized that we were right. See, I was already in camp a few years, so I knew. The conditions were atrocious. I mean, to survive and you come in the country, and the first time I saw a piece of white bread or a piece of chocolate, I forgot how it looked like already. I wouldn't--

Has the experience of these years left you with any feelings about the Germans?

Well, they left me, in the beginning, when I was liberated, my feeling was I could kill out every one of them, as such. But as years go by and I think back, and I said, they had a lot of help. And the main help, if you would study some books from the Holocaust, where did the Germans build most of their-- all of their extermination camps. If you look through, only in Poland. They didn't even build it in Germany.

Why? The Polish people helped them. And I am more annoyed at the Poles, even than the Germans because they only had help. I was wondering why all these crematoriums-- I mean, they had a crematorium in Buchenwald or in Dachau on a smaller scale. They only those who got ill or whatever, you know, they burned.

But in Poland, where these five crematoriums were built in Auschwitz or Treblinka or Majdanek, they were specially built, nothing else, for extermination. As they brought in a trainload of inmates or Jews, right away they went in gas chambers. And the Poles helped them. The Ukraine, the Lithuanians, and Poles, they jumped on the bandwagon to help the Germans for nothing, just because they promised them they would give them a bit extra ration.

And I felt more against the Poles than the Germans. Even though the Germans committed all these crimes, but they helped them. It's like a thief. He goes and steals. But the one who received the goods always gets a high penalty. And that is how it should.

I didn't-- I haven't got love for them. I'll be quite honest, I was very disappointed to come into the house, to take away the furniture, the Poles-- the Germans didn't need it-- to come into the factory, to take away the factory. All right, the Germans would have had it just the same, but not the blatantly and openly.

You live with the people. You talk with them. And you help them with money and you help them with food. We used to help them before the war with everything-- come in and being so blatantly anti-Jewish and show it to your worst enemy, your enemy that occupied your country.

Did the experience of these years change your attitude towards life, do you think?

Yeah, it must have done. Of course it changed my attitude because before the war I was only a kid, went to school, freedom, no care in the world. And I didn't need to look for security because I knew my parents would look after me. But when I was liberated and when I was-- when we first came in this country, the first year also had no worries whatsoever.

We could not care less. We said, oh, we survived. OK, let's live it up. You know. We really going haywire. Nothing mattered. We survived, right, and everything.

But as your years were going by, we started learning the language. We started learning a profession or a trade, whatever there is. And started getting married, having a family. Yes it did. We started, like I try and protect my children. Maybe when I say "protect," it's in the back of my mind, oh, it's my children. I must look after them. It doesn't matter if they're

married or they're old enough, it's a thing.

Maybe because I didn't manage to have it. I mean, when I was 13 I was already separated from my parents. But I do feel-- I like to feel that my kids are secure. They can come back to me for something when they need.

There's one story I would like to mention. After the war, when I was liberated in Czechoslovakia, so I decided I'm going back to Poland to see if any of my relatives survived. Most people did that. I went back to my town, to Plock. I registered my name with the local police in the Town Hall. And I said, look, I survived. Keep my name here. I'm going to go traveling, and if somebody from my relations come, tell them I survived. At least they will know.

Anyway, I done that. I spent in Poland for about a week. I traveled around all over Poland. Then I decided I'm going back to Czechoslovakia. When I came back to the Polish border, Katowice, not far from Czechoslovakia, the Polish police did not allow any more civilians to cross the border. And I was really frightened.

I wanted to go back. I had a-- I was wearing-- I was a bit canny to that. I bought myself a Russian little cap. You know, you could buy it or had it made. And I bought a--

You mean a military cap?

Yes. You know, it was similar. It looked like the Russians. You could buy that. And you bought a little badge with a sickle, you know, the Russian thing. And I stuck it on there. Some people thought that I'm a Russian. And I had a green little jersey.

Anyway, I was sitting there. I had to stay there overnight. In the meantime, during the night somebody pinched my cap. Anyway, and I was a bit worried. And here they were arresting everybody, the Polish police. And I was sitting right in the corner there. And I didn't know what to do.

The Polish police didn't come over to me yet. They thought I'm a Russian. Then all of a sudden, a whole lot of Russian soldiers were on the-- come on the platform, were sitting, drinking, starting to drink, playing the accordion, like Russian soldiers. And the officer, he had about full of medallions sitting there with them.

He calls out to me, come over here. I know you're not a Russian. You are Jewish, aren't you? I said, yes. He said, don't worry. I'm Jewish as well. What are you doing here?

So I said, look, I have got nobody left here. I want to go-- I'm going to England. Why to England? I've got an auntie in England, which I have. It's true, I tell you, an auntie.

So he said, come here. Sit down here. Take a glass. I'll pour you out a glass of whisky. You don't need to drink it. You're too young. Just sit with me. And he took-- he said a train is coming over here, and empty train. It's going to be a troop train. I'm responsible for this troop train. I'm in charge of it.

I've got my men who is looking after my case and my baton and all that. He said, you come up with me. He took me up with him on the train, bypassed all the Polish police, all the military police, sat with him on the train. He took me all the way to Prague. He gave me chocolate and oranges and food.

He asked me various questions, how I survived, you know, just like you. And I told him. And it was like a godsend. It was a Jewish officer in charge of this. And he said, he said, I don't blame you. You have got no family in Poland. Why do you want to stay? He said they were never very friendly to Jews people.

And I went-- I went back to Terezin, and I came in here. But that was an epithet. It sticks in your mind. It could be touch and go. If the police would have arrested me, I couldn't have come in here.

Did you find out what his name was?

No, I didn't. As a matter of fact, that is such a pity, such a pity because, in those days, I explained, we just didn't bother. We didn't visualize that anything like this will be useful. And it was really tragic because, I'm telling you, he looked after me like his own son. All night we traveled and all day, 24 hours.

I had a comfortable seat, and he gave me to eat and sweets and to drink. You know, he didn't want to give me whiskey or juices and all that, you know, very, very nice. But it was a great help, a great help.

Were the other soldiers nice to you?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yes. In any case, they wouldn't interfere. He was in charge. He was like a quite a high-ranking officer. And they listened. They couldn't care less. You know how front troops were. They just fought a war, they won, and they were all night and all day, they were playing the accordion and dancing over these Cossacks dances. But it was-- it was very nice.

Did you find out where this chap came from?

He came from Leningrad, I think he told me. He was from Leningrad. And he was-- he joined up in the army. He was a-- well, joined up-- he was a regular, really. And so, to be frank, he asked me more questions about myself. He was interested in them.

As I said, what will you do with yourself, you know, that sort of things he various asked me. And he said, look, if you have got a family in England, it's good you should go there. He said, you can go to school. You can be educated and all that sort of things.

He was a wise man, you know. He spoke to me like you speak to a child. I mean, I know I was already 18 or 19, but the point is we lost about six years education. And we were still acting. We were really acting when you came to this country. We were acting like little children because we were not used to it.

I'll tell you an example. When we arrived to this country, we went straight to-- went to Carlisle airfield. And from there, in military lorries, they took us to Windermere. You most probably came across that.

When we arrived in Windermere, they took all our clothes away and then afterwards had a shower. We went into our sleeping rooms to sleep. And the bed was made. And the nurse came in. She said, get into bed and then I'll come in, and I'll give you something to eat. But I lie down on the bed, and I was waiting for the blanket.

She came and she said, why don't you go into the bed? I said, I didn't know. This is a bed made? She said, yes, you are lying on top of it. [LAUGHS] I didn't know.

And then it was on a plate, white bread, I remember like now, and sardines and milk. And she said, there's three slices. If you want some more. let-- she didn't manage to shut the door. I whipped it in in one go, just like that.