

Today is Tuesday, September 18, 1984. I am Katherine Rabinowitz, and I am interviewing Herman "Grabby" who is--
"Gray-bee".

Graebe. Excuse me. Who is a participant in the conference, Faith in Humankind, Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust.
What is your complete name?

Graebe, G-R-A-E-B-E.

And your first name, please.

Herman.

Where and when were you born?

In Germany. You want the town?

Please.

Solingen in 19 of June, 1900.

What were the occupations of your parents?

My parents?

Right.

My father was a weaver.

And your occupation.

Engineer.

Engineer. At the time of the war? Well, not-- at the time that Hitler took power in Germany.

1933?

1933. Were you married at that time?

Oh, yeah.

And did you have children?

One boy.

One boy. One Sohn-- son.

And you were an engineer at that time.

Yeah.

And where were you living?

Living? In Solingen.

Your entire life was spent--

I did what?

Was your entire life spent in that one town?

No, no, no. I spent up to that time, maybe till '34.

And after 1934, where did you live?

I was on the run. [LAUGHS]

Pardon? On the run?

On the run for my safety.

OK.

I was mostly in Berlin. Sometimes on the way I came back in other towns, Northern Germany. And in 1938, I was assigned to the Organization Todt, T-O-D-T.

And what did this organization do?

They built fortifications on the west wall. There was then an engineer from big complex that built bunkers and fortifications. He had already three or four dozen people employed there.

And you worked there?

Up to 1930-- to '40, 1940.

And then from--

And then actually, I was moved only five kilometers to another town, completed their fortification. And then '41-- I can't remember when it was. It was after the German troops on June the 22nd, 1941 moved into Russia. And it must have been end of July or early in August when I got a telegram from the OT, Organization Todt, to go to Lemberg with a telegram and report at the Eisenbahn-Pionier-Oberbaustab SÄ¼d. That's a long word, ne?

So I did. Had no choice. So by that, I hadn't to go in the army either. I didn't want that, ne. And they assigned to me a job in Zdolbuniv-- S-D-O-L-B-O-W. Ukraine-- where I arrived mid-September. Mid-- I believe mid-September. That's not 100%. Could be the 18th, could be the 20th.

So I came with 10 people. But it didn't take long. They had many people, and I found out much to my surprise that all the Jewish people, Jewish men mostly, they were craftsmen, contrary to Germany, where the Jewish people, they were doctors or academic. They had academic degree. Not there. They were blacksmith and carpenters and what you want. You could use them.

So I hired them. And one of my first-- I need an office, and I need an interpreter because I didn't speak Russian and Polish. I hired a lady. And the lady was then-- the name was Rosalia Warchiwker. Rosalia-- Rozalia Warchiwker. W-A-R-C-H-I-W-K-E-R. Warchiwker.

She was competent in four or five languages. And-- just a minute. So she became not only the secretary, became a confidant in that what I did later. She told me and other people too that before I came, four weeks, six weeks before,

there were a mobile killing unit, SS killing unit, came into that town and killed men, only men, 150, 200--

250.

Huh?

250.

Men. So her husband got killed.

Can we identify-- you please now identify your name on the tape?

Right, of course. Rosalia Warchiwker now lives in Florida. Her name is Maria Bobrow.

Thank you very much. And from time to time, she will be contributing to this interview too. Continue.

Yeah. So she told me about that her husband got killed together with all the other men. I couldn't believe it, that German did that without reason, without any reason. And I actually-- I didn't believe it. I think it put on a big lie either to them or their people to me.

Eli Pfefferkorn from The Jerusalem Post is also sitting in on this interview and will be asking Mr. Graebe some questions. Will you continue now with when you came into the Ukraine?

Yeah, this lady became my confidant as I told you, I couldn't believe what she told me and all of Jewish people, that appeared a killing unit, that something came in the town and other towns, too, and killed men, only men.

So I didn't believe it because I'm a German. So what did I do? Are they crazy? Is that the National Socialismus? So I was up-- enraged. But I kept it to myself. I kept my mouth shut even to her.

I was always in doubt that they put a story on. But then later I found out, yes, it was so, ne? So if so, it was I made then already made up my mind, I don't participate anymore with Hitler, what he is doing. We are in a war.

I built railroad facilities for the railroad facility. I worked directly under Berlin, OT, Organization Todt. And so big in my mind came already a thought to help these poor people. But how? Ne? How should I do it, ne?

So little by little by little it substantiated in my brain you have to do something to defend my honor. I'm a German. So I decided at least to help her. So I made her Jewish-- and I make her a German. No, not a German, a non-Jewish.

Volksdeutsche.

What?

Did you make her a Volksdeutsche?

No, no. Catholic.

You made her Catholic?

I made her Catholic.

This is your secretary, right?

Yeah, yeah, she was sitting here. And she's sitting there now, ne. And so that was a story by itself, to do that. And for that, I needed the help of the Gebietskommissar, district commissioner, his party.

I knew him. I get acquainted with him a couple of times. And I said to him-- he said, are you happy here in our town? If I can be of help to you in any way, tell me. I said, I tell you I have something which I don't like, but it's there. Said, I have a secretary. That black one? Yeah, that black one.

I said, she is acting like she is a Jew. She is not a Jew. She is not a Jew. She had the yellow patches here and in the back. Then she is a Jew. No, she is not. Why not? Her husband was a Jew. I made that up. Her husband was a Jew, and that poor woman that's believing she married a Jew, that is--

You were talking about how you were making your secretary into a Gentile.

Yeah, the district commissioner. I get crazy here. He asked me, can I be of help to you? Yeah. I said, you can. I hope so. I have a secretary, the black one. And she is-- she put in her mind that she is Jewish. And in my opinion, is not. I said her husband was Jewish. He is not. She's a Catholic.

Well, then I have to forbid her to wear the patches. That's what I wanted. I said, you do that. I cannot. And he came Monday to the office. So I made it that Maria was then Rosalia. Said, this is the Gebietskommissar here. And he want to talk to you. And you answer that, you stay here. It's very serious.

I made a serious, serious face. So what is it? He said, Mr. Graebe said you are not Jewish and you act like a Jew. You were married to a Jew? Is that right? Well, I don't know. I am Jewish. And I told you always say you are Jewish. If he say, why are you Jewish? Because I married a Jew.

Your parents, what were they? Were they Jewish? No. What were they? Catholics. Then you are Catholic. No, I'm a Jew. So that kept on. Later he got so enraged. He want to show her how important it is.

And he said, I forbid you to wear the patches. You come to my office, and you get the certification that you are non-Jewish. Polish. She came from L³dz. Then when he went, I said, no, listen. I said, you take the patches off, he said. So Maria-- Rozalia, don't take the patches off. Take one off and leave the other one on. Why?

I said, for two or three years you lived here as a Jew. The police and all them, the Ukrainian police, have seen you as a Jew. So take one off, not two. OK, I do what you want. I take one patch off.

As soon as that happened, I tell you, the police grabbed her. You have not-- you need two patches, and you have only one. Called to the-- to the office, from the police office. They called [GERMAN]. The damn woman and so forth should have the patches off.

So she came to the office almost crying, and said, no, they shout at me I should take the patches off. I said, OK, then take the patches off. Put that on and take the back patches on. So for one week, we played that game, until they got enraged, not with Me they said, for the final thing is now you take the patches off, and she did. And she became very helpful to me.

And that was '41. In '42, I had already my operation territory got bigger and bigger and bigger. I employed later in '42 5,000, 6,000 people. She became so helpful, with others too, had a big office. And in '40-- in the mid-'40s, she got scared. She said that might work in '41, but I don't know. Bring me to some other place.

The Ukrainian, they don't believe that. She found that out. The Ukrainian policemen, they called them militia. I said, OK. I brought her down to Poltava and met some other people, Jewish people, which I had to hide and brought them all there.

I had no job. I supported them with my own money. And so she came down there, and said Graebe sent us, sent me there here too. And they make-believe an office and so forth. Then in 19-- in December of '42, I became heart-- I got a heart attack. It stretch and strain and me.

I had already-- there 250 people. on my mind. I had them. Money, food.

[SIDE CONVERSATIONS] I'll summarize it. I'll put it that I'm-- Next question. So you had, Mr. Graebe, 5,000 Jews working under you in different localities on you in the war effort. Right?

I would say in Volhynian-Podolian.

Yeah, in the--

Not in one town.

In the entire district. And you have-- and if you were asked why you employed Jews, you said--

No, no, no.

You were never asked by the Gestapo? Never?

No.

They didn't come and say, why do you need Jews?

No. I asked to go to the Gebietskommissar, the district commissioner. Said, can you give me an attachment only Jews? That is the trouble here. All craftsmen are Jewish.

So this is the situation?

Yeah. Then came 19-- November the 7th, 1941.

Yes.

I was alarmed by Rosalia Warchiwker. I think she was then already Maria Warchiwker that in Rovno they had killed 2,000, 3,000, 4,000 people. Said, why?

2,000 or 3,000, 4,000 people?

Yeah, Jews. I didn't believe it. I had-- I had now people in oh a small office, maybe 200, 300, or 400 people the most in Rovno. Rovno were from Zdolbuniv 12 kilometers, 15 kilometers away. So it was hard to believe too, really. I needed people, and they killed them, ne?

So I had always a direct connection with OT, Organization Todt in Berlin. Because of--

Organization Todt?

Yeah, Todt. T-O-D-T. So I always told the district commissioner and always said, if you may be troubled, I report it to Berlin. To whom? Cannot talk to you. And that worked.

You have to know the mentality of the Germans in war, ne? I cannot talk. It will be trouble for you. May be trouble for me too if I will tell you. I'd better not say that.

Actually, I could not tell him. I could say OT. I didn't do that. That worked better, ne? They will believe it may be the right hand from Hitler, ne?

They don't ask questions either then.

So they did come to you to talk to you?

No, no.

They didn't?

Some. Sometimes we're sitting together in a restaurant, something like this. Or he came to my office, this Gebietskommissar?

He did come?

Yeah. Only for a friendly talk, ne?

Yeah.

He said, how many people you have now employed?

I said so many if my guess. And many Jews. Said, oh, 90%. And he said, isn't that a crazy situation in Germany? They are doctors and dentists and all that, and attorneys. Yeah, it is, but I need the people. I said to him, do you have an objection? No. Said, if you may be troubled, you know what I have to do. I have the right connection with Berlin.

I had a very big central telephone center there. There was a telegraph and--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

They gave me that. They said, I have seen that in their store. He said, what is that? And he told me. There are maybe 50 connections there. Say, can you give me one? Oh, sure. I did a favor to him. He had to do a favor to me. So he gave me that.

With this, with my stories.

Do you understand that? No, he bought a-- he got a telephone, bought a telephone and got hold of a telephone where it showed many connections. You know where you have the telephone with different lines? Now, here this would showed that he has many lines and the story that he has direct connections with Berlin. When the commissar came and he saw the telephone with many connections and his story that has a direct line made the impression. Isn't that right?

I didn't want to ask. Because then--

He came and saw the telephone with all the connections that you have Berlin, Poznan, Paris.

Yeah.

He said, well, this is a big shot. I don't want to start with him, right?

Yeah, he said I will be trouble for you if you interfere there.

That's a clever move. Do you get it down?

Yeah, I have it on tape. I have it in my head too. That's very--

That's very good.

Yeah.

Yeah.

This is-- [SPEAKING GERMAN]

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Each one feared someone up.

Right.

An unknown figure.

You'd rather not hear--

An unknown figure.

Yeah.

OK.

[LAUGHTER]

Continue.

With me?

Yes, you.

I would like to ask you--

So then came the execution on the November the 7th in 1941 in Rovno.

Yeah. 1941, Rovno. I have it.

Yeah, that's November the 7th. It was in the winter, and I had some Jewish people employed in Zdolbuniv and others. And they came to me and the 7th. He said, I have my wife and my child-- my child. Others said, have my mother and my father and so on. So 40, 50 people came to me and said, they are living in Rovno, and there is a Jewish action coming. Can you do something?

I went with them to the district commissioner, said, is something happening in Rovno? Said, what do you mean? Say yes or no. I think so, but that's not my jurisdiction. I said, I have some people there. They get crazy . And if they don't work-- if they are crazy, they cannot work. If they don't work, I get in trouble. Why in trouble? I cannot complete the deadline.

He said, what does that mean? I said trouble for me, trouble for you. You are here, the [GERMAN]. Keep that in mind. You will have more trouble than I because I asked you. He said, Mr. Graebe, what should I do? I said-- Mr. Marschall was the name. I said, Mr. Mr. Marschall, interfere. Tell them Graebe needs the people.

Yeah, he went me that night to Rovno. We didn't come through. The streets were already blocked. It was too late. The people fell in the action. So that's the first time I found out. The people, they had to undress. What they told me then,

that's only hearsay, and they killed 2,000, 3,000 people there on the night of November the 7th.

But by that I said, I have to do something. What should I do? I made an Ausweis.

Ausweis is?

Identification.

Identification card. Ausweis.

And put on the name and occupation and how old he is and so forth, working for me. You cannot take him to earn any other job. [INAUDIBLE] And then with this made 500 cards to the Gebietskommissar. He said, what's that? I said, you have to put your stamp on, your name.

He said, why me? I said because you are the [GERMAN]. Don't shout at me. I said, I have to tell that you or you don't believe it. Yeah. What should I do? Said, you give \$0.50 for each card. The Jews were happy to pay that.

Yeah. OK, put them down here. This afternoon, you come and pick them up. We did. So each one got an Ausweis.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

That was 500, including the families?

This was with the families?

Yeah, with the family.

500.

And his family.

So--

Oh, each card said the name of the worker--

And his family.

Oh, I see. Yeah.

So [SPEAKING GERMAN]

You explain that to them in English.

These cards said, the identity cards, the identity cards was for the worker and his family. And it said that explicitly that he cannot be taken to any other labor detail but working for Mr.--

Only for me.

For Graebe, that he is designated to work for this project only. So they couldn't take them away. So in from information, I found out that they killed a couple of thousand people, 2,000, 3,000 people in Rovno, woman, man, whatever they could find there. It was too much for me to believe that Germans do that. What for?

You didn't believe that?

No. But then yes.

But [SPEAKING GERMAN]

I asked Mr. Graebe, in the '30s, didn't he see Jews being taken away later in '36, '7, sent to Ost--

Eastern countries.

Eastern territories? He says, no, he didn't know, and that he was once invited to a party-- to a party conference, a party meeting, he didn't go. He said, you go. I don't want to go. So he was not informed.

I just want to ask one more question. [SPEAKING GERMAN] a Social Democrat, that maybe this was the motivation? Because he said he was a non-party person.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

The Sozial Demokrat collaborated finally.

Yeah, they did.

Yeah.

OK, continue with your workers and their cards.

So we are here with Ausweis and the 500 cards.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

In '42.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Then I got informed by some confidential people there would be a Jewish action coming in three months and five months and six months, maybe in one year in Zdolbuniv too. I said to Mrs. Warchiwker, said we have to do something. I said-- she got afraid then.

The Ukrainian police, they were the one who killed, trigger happy. Said I do something. I bring you to Poltava. I make there and was 1,000 kilometer east. I bring you to Poltava, and you open up an office. And we had there 300, 400, 500 people, all Jewish people.

And so she was down there. On December of '42, I got a heart attack. I was recovering then after six, seven weeks. And I came then back to Zdolbuniv. And I got bigger and bigger and had more jobs and more jobs.

And when I came back, I could see how important I was already without saying anything. Always this, that was enough. I had always civilian clothes. I'm well dressed, tailor made. [SPEAKING GERMAN]

Could you translate that, please?

You speak German?

Clothes make the man.

I was being very well dressed.

Yeah. You see, I could then by conversation hear that people feared me. Not the police, me. They didn't know what connection I had in Berlin. Sometimes I told her. She laughs. Said, stop that laughing. Stop that laughing. That's not a laughing matter. That's a matter of life and death.

And I understand. I understand.

Excuse me. Can I go back for a second? The time when you had your heart attack, where-- you said you were not at your place for six or seven weeks, where were you?

Poltava. That is about 1,000 kilometer east of Zdolbuniv.

OK. Was there any danger for the Jews working for you at that time?

No, no, no, no.

OK.

No, but when I came to Zdolbuniv back, that I could go, by conversation I heard how important I was. If you employ 5,000, 6,000 people in the war, you're big. Not in one town. Volhynian--

In the district.

Yeah, the district Volhynian-Podolian.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

So I absorbed that in my mind. And I played that to my fortunate. Each time they came and want to question me from the party, the district commissioner said always, let's don't talk about it. Bad for you. Bad for me. Don't talk about it. Right. Worked 100%.

On the other hand, in the war, there's shortage, shortage of drink and food, entertainment.

Where did you get it from?

Money.

Where did you get the money?

From my own money. I had already made by 1939 350,000 marks. My money.

This is just from your working as an engineer?

This is from your salary? Your salary?

Yeah, my own. Yeah.

OK, you did have-- you did inherit money?

No, I have poor parents. They're very poor, 350,000 marks. So.

So?

I had to pay the food and all what goes with it.

For the workers.

Sure. They had to live.

They didn't get food from Germany?

No, no. They were all-- [SPEAKING GERMAN]

OK. In Poltava he had Jews. How many Jews were there in Poltava?

Oh, 200, 300.

There were 200, 300 Jews who were unemployed. There was no work there. So they didn't get any rations, but they needed food. So he, from his money, from his savings, he bought food for them to supply them with food. Do you understand?

Mhm.

Is this clear?

OK, so those people had no cards. Did they have cards also? No.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

No, no, no.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Yeah.

Yeah?

Yeah.

You understand that?

No, no.

OK. You see, some of the Jews that they employed had an Ausweis, and they were really working, so they got food. But in Poltava, because the action, the Aktion, was coming on, he had about 200 Jews supposedly employed in work of the railroad. But they didn't do any work because there was no work.

But he had cards for them?

No, he had no cards. And because they had no cards, they didn't get any supply of ration of food. But they needed food, right? They couldn't go out working, so he used his savings to buy food for them.

But all the work that you were doing was for the German government, though. So you were getting--

No, no, no.

No?

No, there was nothing.

There in Poltava was nothing. The Poltava was a bluff. The other places were no bluff.

No bluff, yeah.

But Poltava was a bluff.

But the other jobs you were doing all were for the government.

Right, the others.

So you were getting paid very well.

Yeah.

Very well by the government.

He had his income.

Yeah.

That's important. Right. Go ahead. [SPEAKING GERMAN]

On 13 July, 1942, [SPEAKING GERMAN]

You had workers in the ghetto? Did they have to leave the ghetto to work?

Yeah, and in the night had to be in the ghetto. In the daytime--

Who brought them back and forth?

No, in the morning--

They just went under guard?

They brought them out right to the gate, and then they came to my job. So I learned on the, I think, that the [SPEAKING GERMAN]

The Saturday, I found out through my superintendent that come on Monday on the 13th came a Judenaktion.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

July.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Can we try to keep this as much as English as we can, please?

Yeah.

OK. July action?

I think that is an important date. [SPEAKING GERMAN] I told him, you take the people. And he told me on Saturday, take all the people, the 130 people out today, and bring them to Zdolbuniv. I have work there for them. I said, no

question asked, take them out. He did.

When the Jewish people have seen, that they took off with their bags, big bags with their belongings over the street. They said Graebe takes the people out. Must be Jewish action. That's what the rumors were already there.

So they went to Dr. Pilz. That was the leiter the SS. And said, Graebe takes the people. There must be a Jewish action coming. We hear the rumors anyhow. Graebe did? Yeah. Where is Graebe?

In Zdolbuniv. Don't know. He take the people off. They are already gone. Now, tell us. No, there now keine Jewish action? It's is a big lie.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Right. When it came-- when he came-- Graebe came to take out the Jews to Zdolbuniv because the he knew about the action that was going to take place in Rovno, he took them out from the ghetto to Zdolbuniv. The SS officer said, who allowed them to take out, and why did they take them out?

And so they said--

Graebe.

Graebe took them out. Said, who is Graebe? So who they went. The SS went and arrested seven of his employees.

Polish employees.

Polish employees.

Yeah.

Yeah.

So [SPEAKING GERMAN] thunderstorm.

Can we try to do this in English?

Hmm?

Can we try to do this in English?

Let's say it was a heavy thunderstorm that evening and Saturday. I went to the police, German police in Zdolbuniv, and I told them this story.

Schutzpolizei this was.

So he said so-and-so that my men came there. He ran away. The leader, he ran away. And so he said then that happen. [SPEAKING GERMAN] in thunderstorm. Said, what I do-- he said, all what he could find out was there is no Jewish action coming on Monday.

Mhm.

I believed that. No? So when the police told me, said, Mr. Graebe, honestly, there is nothing coming on Monday, OK, I went with this lady here on Sunday to Mizoch, where all these 130 people lived. Mizoch and Zdolbuniv were maybe seven, eight kilometers apart.

So I went over there. We talked to the parents. Were all young people, 20 years, 22 years, 24 years, all men. Said, you have to go back to Rovno. They cried and cried. The parents came to me.

Oh, don't. please, please. I said, there's no way out. They have to go back. I tell you, if anything comes, which I don't believe, I will be in the ghetto.

They have left the ghetto. I will be in the ghetto and protect them. I will protect them. That's my business. Maybe I should have kept my mouth shut. That was dangerous business.

So they came back on Monday. But to make sure, I went to Dr. Pilz, academic. Yeah, Yeah, Dr. Pilz. doctor of criminology, yeah?

Doctor of criminology?

No, Dr. Pitt was-- he makes fun of the missions.

Yes. Dr. Pilz.

Yeah.

I went to him, SS leader, sturmbannführer.

Sturmbannführer.

I said, Dr. Pitt, I couldn't get out of my mouth "sturmbannführer." I said Dr. Pilz. I said Dr. Pilz, so-and-so, I am Graebe.

Ah, you're Graebe? Had a pistol here and had a horsewhip there. Oh, I said, my God, what kind of a man is that? He said, you took the people off on Saturday here. Why? I said they have lice.

You said they had lice?

Lice, I said. They had lice. They had to go home, and they all have to wash and clean themselves and get new clothes on and come back and do that again and again. Oh. Oh, that's a different story. Why didn't you tell them? I said, whom should I tell that?

Get a clerk and say, I do that and that? No, no, no. OK. So it was so-- there's no Jewish action. Now, listen. There is no Jewish action coming. He told me, Dr. Pitt, I went to the office, my office.

15 minutes later came an SS man-- SA man. Is here a man of Graebe? Yeah, what is it? You have to come to the district commissioner. He was a Dr. Bayer.

I went there. You never can say I ran away. I went there. I said, now, Dr. Bayer, what is? You took the people out on Saturday. I said yes. Don't make me nervous. I have come from Dr. Pilz already. He told me there is no Jewish action coming tonight. It was Monday, ne.

Oh, you checked first before--

No, he said-- [INAUDIBLE] should I tell you something? I said, tell me something. There is a Jewish action coming tonight. Said what? I brought all the people back. Are you crazy?

I'll have to explain that to you because you don't know.

I said, are you crazy?

Oh, God.

OK, can we--

I must explain to her.

God, gee.

Because you see, when he took out those 150 Jews-- he took--

130.

130 Jews, the SS-- the SS officer, Dr. Pilz, the sturmbannführer, said how can you take out Jews from the ghetto? I said, what do you mean I can't take out Jews? They work for me, and they got lice. So do you want me-- I had to send them back into the ghetto to clean up and then take them out.

So he said they work for me. Now the same-- so he went to Bayer, another person. He said, tell me the truth. Is there going to be an action in Rovno? He says, Aktion? Do you know what Aktion is?

He says, I'll tell you, yes. Pitt said no. Just a minute. Let me explain. I knew you wouldn't understand because only you'd be a survivor can understand it. So I said, what do you mean there's going to be an action? I have my Jews there who work for me. He never-- they didn't work for him.

He said there's going to be-- I got to take my Jews out. Right?

Yeah.

Do you see what he did? And they didn't know whether he had them or not. They work for me. Go on.

Yeah, so I had-- on Sunday I had talked to the parents, and I told them if anything comes, I will protect them. At that time, I had my wife there and my son. My son was 10 years old for six weeks vacation for the son.

They came from Germany?

From Germany, from my hometown. So they were there. And Monday, when I knew it came an action, I was nervous. I don't want to get killed. I know the Russian, the Ukrainian had a gun, that big. And they are trigger happy. They cannot-- with German they cannot be dead.

So I was nervous. My wife said to me, why are you so nervous? And finally I told her. I said, listen, tonight is a Jewish action coming in Rovno. What is that?

See, they kill maybe 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000 people. She said, what have you to do with that? That is not your business.

Your wife never knew what you had been doing?

What?

Your wife did not know what you had been doing all along?

No. She said, what have you to do with that? Stay away! You are not Hitler. They cannot blame you. Said, yes, yes, yes. You are always right, yeah. You are always right.

I tell you, I was in meetings yesterday with Maria, then Rosalia. I promised her parents, if anything happens, I will be there to protect them. What? You have told them? Yeah. To protect them? Wie? How?

Well, as best as I can. It will be a sharp shooting business. She cried. Said, OK. That's fate. Give me a paper signed by you that I can-- my son and me back to Germany. Something will happen. Why? You cannot break that promise. You promised the parents.

There is no way out. You have to keep that promise. Find me a thousand women, 10,000 women who would say that. There's a 10 years boy. Yeah? We had nothing to do with the crazy orders of Hitler. Yeah.

And she said, you have to keep the promise. You keep that promise. So I went to the owner that night. 10 o'clock, the light went on, and I was in the front of the ghetto, in front of the house in the ghetto.

What I have seen. There is so much here to tell you with [SPEAKING GERMAN]

And they started [SPEAKING GERMAN] the people in two houses too. And I could see in the windows. They got crazy. So I stood there. I had machine guns too. No, machine pistol.

You had?

10-- 10 shots. I have seen then on the Monday-- on the Monday morning that Pitt had a revolver six shots. Had six times the trigger. I have only one, came 10 shoot. I thought I had more firepower than he had.

So when that happened, I know I'm a little bit bigger than he is if it comes. But it was crazy anyhow. If I kill him, 10 minutes later, they kill me. So 3 o'clock at night, I was so thirsty. I said to myself, I said I go to the office, have a cup of coffee, come back in 15 minutes.

I was not at the office. In the front of the office came people, came on and said, they're breaking in our houses. I came back. So they took already starting in the breaking in the windows and all that.

So I stopped and there were Ukraine. I could not speak Ukraine, but my guns was speaking there.

Your what?

Your guns was speaking. The guns were--

There were six-- six--

Yeah, I understand.

Six or seven Ukrainian soldiers there. So that was the craziest night of my life. Then I could see the thing succeed. So I put two, three shots in the air. That didn't help.

They shoot at me. They killed seven. We lost seven or eight people.

German?

German?

No, his people.

Jewish people.

Jewish people.

There from then. They were-- [SPEAKING GERMAN]

I said, regardless of the consequences, you have to do something.

Just one minute. Do you know why I asked in German? Because we lost. He fully identified--

That right.

He fully identified with the Jews and he said we lost. So he was not a German. You know, he was saying-- that's why I said when we, whether these were Germans, and I said we.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

We are-- you understand?

Yeah, I say here "my Jewish people."

His people.

No, he said "we lost."

I know, but "his people."

Do you understand why I--

Of course I understand.

And that's an interesting point too.

That's why I was shocked that you asked the question, because it was obvious what he meant.

Yeah.

I now realize yourself. There are laying here seven, eight people from the Jewish people that worked for me.

Yes.

And they were still trigger happy. I had killed two, three. One was heavily wounded, and the other one was dead. But the next bullet could be me. So I saw two SS men, talked to them. I have to talk to Pilz right away here. Very important. I got order from Berlin.

For what, he said? I cannot explain it to you. He had nothing here. Said, I have order from Berlin to talk to Dr. Pilz. Where is he? On the marketplace. I go to there.

I went to the marketplace. He was there, standing there with the whip and had a hand on a gun.

The marketplace in the ghetto?

In the ghetto.

Yeah.

I went there alone. There was 300 people were sitting there. So.

Yeah, yeah.

Men. And they--

Lined up?

Yeah. Waiting for their turn.

Yeah.

Now, I said, Dr. Pitt, what is that? Who is he, the big liar? You told me there is no nothing coming. What is that here? He looked at me. I said, I have here 130 people. Seven, eight people already dead.

Thanks God. Thanks God already. We have not do-- who did that? I don't know. Said, I take the other people home. No. I take the people to Zdolbuniv. He said no. Yes, Dr. Pitt. I take the people to Zdolbuniv, regardless what you say. We were up front from here to the wall.

Then I could see he put a hand on the holster of the gun. Oh my God. That man is trigger happy. He is crazy. I want to live. He got the gun out. Then I had to get my gun.

I had an overcoat. Took the gun and put that in front, so he could see I played business too. Said, Dr. Pilz, don't make a wrong move. One of us will die. And I hope it's going to be you.

So he said nothing. Said, I take the people out. Now what? I take the people out. And said I will even report it to Berlin. Whether that did the trick, I don't know. He said go. Go.

With that I went to the two houses. The people were shaking. I got them all, took them home to Zdolbuniv. Yeah. But I lost seven or eight people.

Do you want to-- can I go ask a question like this? Dr.--

Pitt.

--Pitt never checked with Berlin?

Oh, how could he? Berlin is a big city.

Yeah.

He was in the ghetto.

No. How could he?

The bureaucracy was so intricate.

No, I told him. I said, I cannot tell you.

But you put him on the defensive when you said you lied to me.

Yeah.

Right.

Yeah, I told you. You're the biggest liar.

Right. So he was afraid then, because he had lied.

He was afraid.

So I took the people.

Because he was met with--

So I took the people home, and that went on, naturally, in Zdolbuniv. But then, they fenced me in, so to speak. They didn't give me any information anymore. The district commissioner was not my confidant anymore. He did not tell me anything.

The commissioner didn't tell you anything?

No, from that time.

That's Dr. Bauer?

No, Bayer was in Rovno. That was Marschall.

This was Marschall.

Marschall. And on October the 13th, all Jewish people in Zdolbuniv got killed.

In Zdolbuniv?

Yeah, Zdolbuniv.

October 13, 19 what?

1942. And October 13 in Zdolbuniv, October 14 in Mizoch.

Mizoch.

Mizoch. T-S-C-H. And October 15 in Ostrog. That was all the districts of Marschall.

Yeah.

So but at that time, this lady was already in Poltava. Yeah. Already three, six weeks. She was protected. That's just all right. It was the dangerous part of my life. I want to live too, ne? Is that right?

Mhm.

Many people later said, why did you do that? Are you crazy? But my wife said to me, if you have them given the people the assurance you would do that, you cannot break your promise. Be a man of honor. Find me a thousand women or find, I say, 10,000 who would say that. Who would say that? My wife is now a cripple mentally. She got a stroke. She's now living in a Jewish--

Nursing home.

Nursing home.

Yeah, in San Francisco. So.