

OK, so you were telling me that you were leaving Warsaw now for the country.

Mm-hmm.

Were you in Warsaw during the Jewish uprising of the ghetto?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Nie.

No.

No.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Did you hear about it?

[SPEAKING POLISH]?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Tak.

It was discussed a lot by the Poles.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

What did they think about the fact that the Jews--

[SPEAKING POLISH]?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

It varied. Some expressed regret, and others said, let the Jews burn.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH] she also had to eat, so she started making cigarettes.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And she would distribute them through boys who were selling them on the streets.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

One day, she came in the morning, was supposed to go back in the evening. And it rained very heavily.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Then the sun came out. So she decided to stay for the rest of the day.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And met my father.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And there was nothing left to eat.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And he told her that he had ordered 2 kilos of lard--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

--at a friend's house.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

There were rumors about an uprising, but nobody knew exactly when it would start.

Did your husband have trouble leaving Warsaw?

Well, he didn't leave.

Well, isn't this when you were in the country?

Yeah. That was my mother and I.

But you'd come back into the city--

Yeah.

--to sell the cigarettes.

OK, OK.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

As soon as she saw my father, he told her to go back immediately because he was expecting that hostilities would break out right away.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

We got into the trolley together.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And we got off on the way to go to pick up the lard.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And I kept going.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And then I was supposed to catch the train from Mlociny.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And before I got to the train station, the firing broke out.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She couldn't get off the trolley. They locked the doors.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And she got caught in the middle of the uprising. I don't know if you're interested in the details of who was where, but the Germans were in the park and the Poles were in a adjoining-- the Polish fighters were across the street.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

They opened the gates and shouted for everybody off the street, to run for those gates.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And they run in one of the houses and sat there.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She was there two or three days.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And there was an incendiary bomb fell in.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

They opened passages in the cellars from house to house, and this is how they moved about.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

They went out-- They went out on a different street.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And she tried to join my father.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Hmm?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

After a few days, she was able to rejoin him.

Had you heard about the concentration camps before this? Did you know about the camps?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

When the word first came out from the ghetto, they said that it's impossible, that that was a hysteric reaction.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

But eventually, they began to believe it.

Don't believe it. [SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

In the meantime, the Russians advanced. But when the uprising broke out, they decided to stop their advance across the river from Warsaw. That was a political move because the uprising was started by the London government in exile. And so they were sort of looking for them to get wiped out by the Germans before they came in, so they wouldn't have much opposition. That's just a parenthetical remark. She didn't say that.

OK, what happened to you after the uprising?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

That's what I just talked--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

There was a section of Warsaw across the river called Praga. [SPEAKING POLISH]

The river went between.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

They were right across the river and just sat there.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Were you with-- were you with your husband? Were you with your husband at that point?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Yeah, yeah.

What had happened to your parents?

What happened to my?

Your parents.

[POLISH]

Parent? Ah. [SPEAKING POLISH] You know what is Umschlagplatz?

No.

It was a--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Umschlagplatz was a large railroad yard in the ghetto where they were bringing the people for deportation to the gas chambers.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

They were factories that were producing for the Germans in the ghetto.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And these people were not taken.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

But that towards the end they were taking them too.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And at that point, they took her father and mother and her sister.

Mm-hmm. To Umschlagplatz and to Treblinka.

And to Treblinka.

Mm-hmm.

Yes.

And my brother was in Israel before the war, because she was a--

Zionist.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She's telling you more about the uprising. Did you want to know about that?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

They would do one house at a time. They would bomb it, and as the people would run out of the house they

would catch them and round them up.

This was the Nazis bombing.

Mm-hmm. Yeah, this was ground fire. It's from the ground, with cannons.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Yeah, they tied people to the tanks.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

To keep the fighters from firing at that.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Pruszków?

Hmm?

Pruszków?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And they took them to a distribution center called Pruszków.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

The streets were all in flames.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

OK. What happened to you in Praga.

No, she was not in Praga.

In Pruszków.

Oh.

In Praga, good. In Praga, Russian.

The Russians were in Praga. OK.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

In Pruszków they were separated.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Dachau.

Dachau.

My father was taken to Dachau. Oh, Dachau.

[SPEAKING POLISH] Breslau.

And she was taken to Breslau.

[SPEAKING POLISH] Breslau.

All women.

Tak. [SPEAKING POLISH]

And they were there two weeks.

How long were you in Pruszków? Pruszków?

In Pruszków? We-- a couple of days. Because come another people, another people. We come with.

How were you taken to Breslau?

A two weeks.

[SPEAKING POLISH] Breslau?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Cattle cars.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

It was the end of '44, and they had no manpower left because all the Germans were in the front. And the factories had to keep working.

Was this a factory camp? Was this a camp where you had to work?

No, I think that's coming.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH] Breslau?

Breslau, tak. [SPEAKING POLISH]

The lorries would come from the various factories to the Breslau camp and load up as many people as they needed for that day.

Did you live in barracks there?

[SPEAKING POLISH]?

Tak.

Were you fed at all?

We were fed OK. Not so good. But.

Was it all Jews there?

No, I was Poland.

This was for Polish prisoners.

Oh, yes. Yes. No, Jews weren't kept in camps.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Jews were exterminated in here.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH] Yeah, she forgot to tell you when they-- when she was in the country, remember I told you the Gestapo came right after we left. We also had to change our name at that point.

What was your name?

Hmm?

What did you change your name to?

I must to change my name.

It was Zawadzki, and she changed it to Rapacki.

Mm-hmm. He was Zawadzki. [SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Hmm. I'm finding out things I didn't know.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

The way she changed her name is she went to a church and got a birth certificate of a dead person, and she got a marriage certificate. And with those two documents, she went to the identity office and got a real identity card, whereas the first one was--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

--false.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

They told her that it would take a month for them to check out all the facts on her application. And every day of that month she thought that they would come and get her.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

After the month was over, she went to get her document, and she didn't know whether she would come



back or not. And so she made all preparations for not coming back.

I have no choice. [SPEAKING POLISH]

Fortunately, they didn't check, and they gave her a real identity card.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She says that when they were rounding up hostages, and they would ask for their identity card, they would look at it and they would say, this is false, it's counterfeit. And they would look at the people's reaction. And if the people panicked, then they realized that they were right.

Is this during the rebellion?

Yes. And in her case, she knew that it was a real identity card. So this was advantageous over a counterfeit one. And also, she knew there was a copy of it in the office.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH] Breslau.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

--people from Breslau were hiding in a house near Wuppertal.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Hmm?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Nie, [SPEAKING POLISH]

OK, I think I may have misled you. When they were--

No.

--coming to get people in Breslau, it was not just for a day or two. It was indefinitely. They were just taking people for an indefinite period.

Tak.

OK, so then they took you to Heiligenhaus. Is that--

Yes, yes.

And was this another camp?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

It was a work camp.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

You lost him in Mlociny.

I lost him in Mlociny. I must have come back. I cannot. And he was alone.

He was alone in the country.

Yes. A little boy. I don't see him one year.

For a year.

After the peace, I come to Warsaw. I can not to come. Ah, but I come to Warsaw. And I look for him. I look here. I look here. I look here for my man and my son. I found him, and my man is not.

Where did you find him?

I don't find him.

You didn't find him.

She found me in an orphanage, but she couldn't find her husband.

OK, well, let's just go back. Heiligenhaus. That was another work camp? Is that some sort of work camp in Germany?

Yeah, but not so like Treblinka. This is I-- so for work.

For work. What kind of work did you have to do?

Is it [SPEAKING POLISH]

The conditions were not good, but her life was not in danger.

No danger.

Were you working there?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH] Little [? sew ?] for make [INAUDIBLE].

The-- what do you call that?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Triggers.

Triggers. Uh-huh. How was your health?

Hmm?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Good.

Good.

Good.

Did anyone--

I was not much-- with much time. I was eight months or nine months. No.

I think less.

Eight, maybe.

Was this in 1944?

Yes, towards the end.

[INAUDIBLE] The Russian come in '45.

Well, to Poland, they came in 45, in February, of '45.

In February. And to me come United State.

You were liberated by Americans?

American come. American [INAUDIBLE].

Did you know that the war was coming to an end?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Tak.

Yes.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

This isn't clear. She said they kept moving them back and forth. And as the Allies were closing in from both sides, they--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

--they were surrounded.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She said that the German propaganda machine was lying to the German soldiers that they were winning battles. But the soldiers could see that the Allies were closing in.

Was there bombing? Did you hear bombing?

[SPEAKING POLISH]?

Tak.

Yes.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

They were digging trenches.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

The Germans were in shelters, but they were not allowed to go into the shelters. So they dug trenches.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She was liberated by the American Army, but then that area was transferred to the British according to the partition agreement.

What was your impression of the Americans?

[LAUGHS] Good impression.

Happy to see them.

After the German.

[LAUGHTER]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

There was a interesting little romance in the camp, But I don't know. She doesn't know if you're interested in that. She met a Italian prisoner of war. And they eventually were married, and he provided for her.

You were married?

Mm-hmm.

After liberation?

No, I don't know. He was-- he with my husband.

Excuse me. I didn't--

She didn't know if my father was still alive.

Oh.

Mm-hmm. [SPEAKING POLISH] I have not-- [SPEAKING POLISH]

She had no hope.

I'm not hope, because in Dachau, I know, in Dachau come nobody back.

[AUDIO OUT]

--[POLISH]

OK, so you were liberated by the Americans. And you married. What was his name? The person you married?

[POLISH]?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

It was a make-believe wedding, because it was a marriage of convenience.

This, it was fine because I want to go back. The only [SPEAKING POLISH].

It was not possible to go back to Poland because the Russians were there.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And the British didn't want people to go back to the Communist regime. So.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

So Mr. Fisichella proposed to her that they marry and go back to Italy. And Italy had diplomatic relations with Poland. And that she would then be able to go back to Poland from Italy.

Because no Nazi [? took home, ?] because-- [POLISH]?

England.

England was another-- this were communists in Warsaw.

Warsaw was communist.

And coming back.

So you went back to Poland, right?

Mm-hmm. But I don't go. Don't go to Italy.

You didn't go to Italy.

No, I prove-- [SPEAKING POLISH]?

Tried.

To go-- [SPEAKING POLISH]

She managed to go to Czechoslovakia and then eventually to Poland.

Yes. This is more--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

It was faster.

It was faster, because I want to see my son. My son, and my husband, I think. No.

OK. Tell me how you--

I looked for him.

--how you found your son.

No, it was a long, long-- [LAUGHS]

Well, where did you find him? Where did you finally find him?

I found him in [SPEAKING POLISH].

In the orphanage. I think you have that from my interview.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[POLISH]?

And where did you go once you found Alex?

I have not nothing, not the--

Money.

--money, not the house. Nothing, nothing. But I have friend before--

The war.

--the war. I hear this one this and this. It was [SPEAKING POLISH]

They were prominent in the Communist government.

I lost him in orphan.

You left him in the orphanage?

Yes, in Łódź. And I come to Warsaw. And I go to friend. It was a strange living.

He was happy.

Happy that I am alive. And I tell him that, oh, come to me, come to me, come to me. And it was a large apartment. I took-- I must-- my son give me a picture with an auto, car. I go to Lodz.

You wanted papers so you could travel.

I took--

OK.

No.

An officer gave-- a friend got an officer to give her a car to go back and get her son from Łódź.

From Łódź. And I come to-- and he [SPEAKING POLISH]

They gave her a high post in the government, and money and clothing. And she was in a good financial position.

And what city did you settle in?

Hmm?

[SPEAKING POLISH]?

In Warsaw.

In Warsaw.

In Warsaw.

My friend was in Warsaw because I live in Warsaw.

OK. How long did you stay in Warsaw.

Not long. It is, when I come to Warsaw, [SPEAKING POLISH]

She came in June of '45, and left at the end of the year.

Because [SPEAKING POLISH]

Her brother-- her brother's wife was in Israel, had a brother in Warsaw. And so she contacted the brother and asked that he find my mother. And he did, through a happenstance, through a common friend. They happened to hook up. And then they asked her to leave Poland with them. [POLISH]?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

They are here now, by the way. They live in New York now.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

It was illegal to leave Poland. She left illegally to Berlin.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Together with her brother.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And then she couldn't leave Berlin.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

With no money.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

So she went to the Italian--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

--chargé d'affaires.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Showed the marriage certificate to an Italian citizen.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

And they helped her to go to the--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

--as a--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

--returning citizen.

So you went to Italy. Did you have Alex with you?

Yes.

[INAUDIBLE].

[SPEAKING POLISH]

The whole time, Except. For when she was caught.

Except when?



When she was caught and taken to the labor.

OK. OK. So you came into Italy. Went to Italy. Where did you live in Italy?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

So we were--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

We were in a refugee camp near Rome called Cinecitta. And then, eventually, we found the brother of my father in New York. And then, of course, her brother was in Israel. They both wanted us to go to their respective countries.

When did you go to Israel?

[SPEAKING POLISH] '53.

And were you in Italy until 1953?

Hmm?

Yes.

Who ran the refugee camp? Do you know who was in charge?

Oh, first it was UNRRA, and then IRO. Then we were--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

We were also getting help from the Joint Distribution Committee.

What did you do in the camp? Did you work?

I work, yeah. I was a--

Teacher, in ORT.

In ORT.

What did you teach?

Math.

Physic and matematik.

OK.

I work in a restaurant too before this. [LAUGHS]

OK, so you came--

After this I was in another work.

OK. OK. So you came to Israel and Alex went to the United States. Did you want to come to the United States also?

Yes. That is a long, long-- [SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH] She wants to know if you're interested?

Interesting?

Yeah.

All right? [SPEAKING POLISH]

McCarthy.

McCarthy [SPEAKING POLISH].

Well, in a nutshell, what happened is that there--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

What happened in a nutshell is that she was very attractive at the time, and she had a lot of men after her. And one of them was a Bulgarian who the American intelligence claimed was a Soviet spy. I didn't find this out until many years later when I requested all of the files about us from under Freedom of Information Act.

She also went back to Poland while she was in Italy, which was very difficult to do. And the only reason she was able to do that was because she had this powerful friend in the Communist regime. And so, as a result of that, and this being the McCarthy era, her visa was taken away from her, and she was not allowed to come here. That's the story in a nutshell. There's much more to it than this.

OK. So you settled in Israel. Where did you live in Israel?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

In-- Before? In Haifa. After, in-- this in Tel Aviv.

Did you have to learn Hebrew?

Yeah, I learned Hebrew.

Did you have problems--

[SPEAKING POLISH] I cannot read the--

Read.

You can't read Hebrew?

[SPEAKING POLISH] Alphabet.

Didn't know the alphabet.

The alphabet I cannot. It was difficult. [LAUGHS]

Did you associate mostly with other Polish people in Israel?

Yes.

How did you support yourself in Israel?

I was a teacher in matematyka. But now no, because I don't see you. I read so.

Did you have problems adjusting in Israel? Was it difficult for you?

[SPEAKING POLISH]?

No. Only the language.

Only the language. I understand. [LAUGHING] OK.

She likes it, there. She feels very comfortable in Israel.

Did you attend the gathering of Holocaust survivors in Israel a couple of years back?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Nie.

No.

No. Mm-hmm.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She tries to avoid any such events because she gets ill for a long time after that. She tries not to watch films or go to gatherings, and--

Try to avoid contact with the Holocaust?

This is open the--

Opens the wounds?

--the wound. [INAUDIBLE]

How would you say that the war affected you?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Ruined my life. [SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She says she became a pacifist. Now I have my own version of what it did for her. I think it made her very reactionary. We don't see eye to eye on the Palestinian issue.

I think her reaction is quite common in Israel. I think a number of survivors in Israel today feel that they can inflict pain on others because of what happened to them. And she sort of has that general attitude. She won't say it, but I can see it in our discussions. They're sort of entitled to special consideration because of

what happened.

She's not-- Her brother was very active in the Likud. She's not quite that far to the right, but she's sympathetic to the Likud point of view, I would say.

Did the Holocaust affect your religious point of view?

[SPEAKING POLISH]?

At least. At least. I don't [SPEAKING POLISH].

I don't believe in God.

I don't believe it.

Have you discussed your experiences with your family?

What family?

Hmm?

Have you discussed your--

What family?

Well--

Her brother, you mean?

Well, I meant that your son and your-- you have a granddaughter. Is that right?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She can't communicate with her because of the language barrier. My daughter is not really interested. I mean, she knows that-- and she knows that she's supposed to be, but it's kind of a hardship for her. I mean, her heart isn't in it. I mean, if she shows any interest, it's mostly to please us.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She says it would take many hours to get all the details.

What are your feelings about Germany today? How do you feel about Germany?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She's not quite answering your question, but she says that she feels a great deal of anger at their-- at our helplessness under the occupation, that they were able to do whatever they wanted to us.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

But there were also decent Germans.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

How do you feel about the fact that Germany gave reparations to Jewish people?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She feels it's a step in the right direction, but she says--

[SPEAKING POLISH]

--they can only repay for some of the material losses. They can't possibly repay for the suffering and the loss of life.

Do [INAUDIBLE].

No.

Is there anything else?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

Anything else?

[SPEAKING POLISH]

In fact, you never found your husband. He did not come back from Dachau?

No, not for life. For many only. For life, no.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

She misunderstood you.

Yes.

And you're married?

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

No.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

[HEBREW]

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

Want to translate?

Yes, I'm sorry. She said that she had--

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

She says that she thinks they should take whatever is possible to take from the Germans, because they took everything.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

They took everything from the Jews. And what she had said before that, they can't pay for the life--

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

--but they took enough, and we should take it, whatever we can take from them.

She said that she had arranged with her husband if after-- I asked her whether in fact she'd ever found her husband, if he had, in fact, ever come back from Dachau, and she said no, that they had arranged that if they didn't find one another, they would each write to the brother in the United States and hope that that way they would get back in contact with one another. And he never made contact.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

No.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

She says there's a lot of money. She's asking if I know how much money--

How much money.

--of the Jewish money is left in the banks of Switzerland.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

That the Germans took and put there.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

Dead people.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

No one knows how much money of the Jews is still there.

Is there anything else? Anything else?

[LAUGHS]

OK, well, thank you very much.

I come to tell you how I found him. But this is a long, long-- sorry--

Story.

There was--

Because I look for him where-- [POLISH], no, where.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

There was actually a tracing service that was established by the Jewish community in Poland after the war. And she almost found me through the tracing service. She was in a house next door. And that's--

I was a detective. [LAUGHS]

But it was the wrong address. It was the house next door. And she eventually found me on her own.

I took in the door in 10:00 evening, 10 o'clock, all asleep. And no, no.

They wouldn't let her in.

I want. I must to go. I must to know if--

My son is there.

--he is here.

How old were you?

I don't want to go.

Well, I guess I must have been around 11.

OK, well, thank you very much.

--saying that she was in a hurry to find Alex because she heard that the orphans were being deported to the Soviet Union.

He was. He was 10 year--

Yeah.

--when I found him.

He was--

10.

--10?

10.

10 or 11.

10 or 11.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]

[SPEAKING POLISH]