

Interview with BERNARD BROCLAWSKI
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Interviewer: Gene Ayres
Transcriber: Linda G. Oman

MR. AYRES: TODAY'S THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19TH,
1991. I AM GENE AYRES, AN INTERVIEWER WITH THE HOLOCAUST
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

TODAY WE'RE TALKING WITH BERNARD BROCLAWSKI.
ASSISTING IN THE INTERVIEW IS LOIS KERNAN. CAMERA OPERATOR
IS LAURIE SOSNA.

Q: GOOD AFTERNOON, MR. BROCLAWSKI.

A: Good afternoon.

Q: WE HAD AN EARLIER SESSION AND I BELIEVE WE LEFT OFF WITH
YOU A YOUNG MAN IN THE POLISH ARMY ON THE VERY FIRST DAY OF
THE GERMAN INVASION OF POLAND AND YOU HAD BEEN WOUNDED AND
ALSO HAD A BAD ACCIDENT AND BROKEN YOUR HIP, I BELIEVE, IN
THE VERY FIRST FEW HOURS OF THE BATTLE. AND YOU WERE BEING
PLACED ON A FARM WAGON BY THREE OTHER POLISH SOLDIERS TO BE
TAKEN FOR HELP IN SOME WAY. I THINK THAT'S WHERE WE LEFT.

A: Yes.

Q: NOW, DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING THAT YOU WANTED TO CORRECT IN
THE MATTER OF YOUR FATHER'S ELECTION?

A: Yes. Prior to starting our session today I'd like to
correct my previous statement regarding my father's
activity prior to the war.

I mentioned in the previous session that he was

elected as a state representative in 1938 which is incorrect. He was elected, as far as I know, in 1939.

Now I'd like to refer to your question when I was taken by those soldiers to a cart. We were encircled at that time by the Germans who were shooting at us and this was in a wooden area.

The owner of that cart, a farmer, realizing what is going on, left that cart with two harnessed horses and we were standing in a wooden area not knowing what is going to happen to us because we couldn't move the horses and the cart to bring us to a safer place.

Although I do not believe in miracles, one occurred at that time. A soldier whom I didn't know -- I was not alone on that cart; another wounded soldier was placed on my left side. We were two. So that soldier approached the cart and said, "I'll try to get you out from this area."

Being afraid that the Germans are very close to us and they might caught us, I rather preferred not to give up myself to the Germans alive. I wanted rather to be killed, but I couldn't take my rifle which was placed on my right side to turn it against me and shoot myself.

So I begged this soldier who was unknown to me that if he can take my rifle and kill me I'll be very happy. He said, "Let's try first to get out from here. To shoot and

kill you, I will eventually do it later if there will be a situation which will force me to do it and only upon your request."

He probably was from that area. Otherwise I don't know how he managed to get out from that uncertainty. He asked me only not to scream. I had terrible pain in that broken leg and that cart -- you know, it was not an asphalt road there and the cart was bouncing and my leg was also bouncing back and forth and I experienced terrible pain.

He asked me again to be quiet because otherwise the Germans might discover where he is. He drove us the entire night and at 10 o'clock the next day -- that would be September the 2nd -- we arrived in a city called Sieradz. I'll spell it. S-i-e-r-a-d-z.

Immediately sanitary personnel approached us and took us on a stretcher into a hospital in Sieradz.

Q: THIS CITY WAS STILL IN POLISH HANDS.

A: The city was still in Polish hands at that time, yes.

Q: DURING THE NIGHT DID YOU HAVE ANY NARROW ESCAPES? COULD YOU HEAR WHERE THE GERMANS WERE?

A: I heard where they were because I heard shooting, but I didn't see them. I didn't see anybody close to us. Of course, he was running away from them probably. I think so.

So, anyhow, he brought us to the city of Sieradz which was at that time still under the Polish administration and I was in that hospital for one night only, not getting special help or special assistance. The next day I was transported to another city which was approximately about 10 miles from Sieradz called Zdunska Wola. Should I spell it?

Q: YES, IF YOU LIKE.

A: Z-d-u-n-s-k-a W-o-l-a. They put me into a hospital, but I didn't get special care at that hospital either.

Q: BY "SPECIAL CARE" DO YOU MEAN --

A: Special care I mean treatment, some treatment, you know. I was in unbearable pain. My leg was broken. My knee was on the right side, turned over to the right completely.

Q: YOU'RE SAYING THEY DID NOT ATTEND TO YOUR BROKEN LEG.

A: You know, already that I was in terrible pain, but nothing has been done to relieve my pain.

Q: YOUR WOUND WAS WHERE?

A: The wound was not a major problem.

Q: WHERE WAS YOUR WOUND?

A: My wound was here (indicating). A little scratch.

Q: YES. ALL RIGHT. AND THAT WAS NOT TENDED EITHER.

A: That wound, yes, but not my leg.

The same day because of lack of treatment or

doctors -- I don't know -- they decided to transfer me to the city called Lodz where I was serving as a soldier in the Polish Army. And when they put us on a train to transport us to Lodz -- the Germans bombarded that area so the train couldn't move. Fortunately, no bombs have destroyed this train and so we survived that bombardment.

When the bombardment was over they took us from the cars and brought us back to the hospital and then decided to transport us from Zdunska Wola to Lodz by sanitary means. That means by -- oh, how --

Q: AMBULANCE?

A: Ambulance.

Q: MOTOR VEHICLE.

A: Yeah. By ambulance. And I was delivered to a military hospital in Lodz September the 4th of 1939.

At that time Lodz was still not occupied by the Germans and I was in that hospital and still waiting what they are going to do with my leg, but probably they had a lot of wounded soldiers already so they couldn't take care immediately of me. I had to wait another 24 hours.

On September the 5th I got the proper treatment. I'm not going to describe what kind of treatment it was, but the fact remains that I got my leg in the right place. Since then my right leg is shorter approximately

three-quarters of an inch.

December 5th in the evening --

Q: DID YOU SAY THE -- SEPTEMBER?

A: September 5th. I'm sorry. On September the 5th in the evening a nurse came over asking if someone has relatives in the city of Lodz because she is a resident of Lodz and, therefore, if one has somebody to notify that he is hospitalized, she'll be more than happy to deliver a note.

I said I have because I had an aunt at that time living in Lodz. So I wrote a note in the Polish language to deliver to her.

The next day -- that means in the morning September the 6th -- my mother -- that means my second mother -- was visiting me because she was at her sister's apartment when the nurse delivered my note. She didn't believe that I am alive and that this is a note from me.

Why? Because when she was running away from Pabianice to Lodz to her sister -- the Polish Army was retreating from the Germans and she probably was retreating with the Polish Army -- she met among the soldiers a few friends of mine who happened to serve in the same regiment as I did and they were retreating too. One of them lives now in Israel. He was Jewish.

And she asked him "Where is my son?" And his response

was that "I don't know what happened to him. I saw that he was wounded and he might have been killed." Therefore, she treated me already as being dead.

But when she saw my written note she became confident that it must be me because nobody could send her such a note. So she decided to come to visit me in the hospital and she look at me and she was crying.

This is not the most important thing, but after she left me -- that means within a day -- September the 6th Lodz was occupied by the Germans and from that time on I became a POW under the German -- under the Nazi administration.

Q: WHAT WAS IT LIKE WHEN THE GERMANS CAME INTO THE HOSPITAL WHERE YOU WERE?

A: I must confess that we were treated like -- how to describe it. We were treated like non-persons. The first thing they did was that they put us on stretchers, all Polish soldiers, regardless of nationality; Jewish, Polish. They didn't consider it at that time. They didn't differentiate us. We were POWs.

Because they had already a lot of their own wounded German soldiers and because this was a military hospital they decided to take over this hospital for the German wounded soldiers and we Polish wounded soldiers were

transferred to another hospital.

But in the meantime I must also admit that on September the 5th the doctors took care of my leg and it was straightened out and I was -- the entire leg up to here (indicating) was covered with a cast.

Q: PLASTER OF PARIS.

MS. KERNAN: CAST.

A: Yes.

Q: CAST.

MS. KERNAN: A BODY CAST.

A: A body cast. So I couldn't move. Only my head was able to move from right to left. I was immovable completely. I couldn't run. I couldn't do anything. But I felt more comfortable the minute I had that cast on my leg and body. I didn't feel the pain any longer. And I was happy that I had it over.

In such a situation I was transferred to another hospital, but when I was brought into it there were no rooms for wounded soldiers because this hospital was already full with wounded ones who probably arrived to this hospital prior to my arrival.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE HOSPITAL?

A: I remember, yes. The hospital was called -- has the name Poznanski Hospital. Poznanski used to be a Jewish

entrepreneur and owner of a huge textile manufacturing enterprise and he also had built a hospital which has been carrying his name.

At that time under the Polish government it was his hospital. I don't know if it was still his property, but it was under his name, Poznanski Hospital. And I was in this hospital approximately six weeks.

But I'd like here to refer to something special, what happened to me at that time. When I was brought into that hospital on a stretcher I was placed on the floor because there were no room for POWs to put them into a bed.

So I was laying on the floor and on the left side of mine was also another wounded Polish soldier and there already were German guards guarding us because this was under German occupation already.

And this German, this Nazi soldier or German soldier was marching back and forth and he began to speak to that comrade, that wounded soldier who was also on the floor, saying, "Now, you know, the time has come to join forces" -- that means Germans and Poles -- "to liquidate all the Jews living in Poland." And I was lying on the floor as a POW and I couldn't respond to it because, you know, under the circumstances what could one say? So this was my first meeting with a German soldier.

Laying on the floor for three weeks approximately I acquired high fever so they transferred me to a room and in that room I was approximately another three weeks and then they decided to transfer me to a hospital which was transformed from the residency of our regiment where I was serving in the Polish Army.

I served in the 28th Regiment in Lodz and those buildings were transformed at that time by the Germans into a hospital where they transferred all the Polish wounded soldiers who had become POWs.

When they brought me on a stretcher into a room where about 60 wounded soldiers were, I realized that I'm in the same room I was serving as a soldier. This happened accidentally, but I was in the same room. Not sleeping or not lying on the same bed, but it was the same room.

Q: WAS IT A ROOM WHERE YOU LIVED WHEN YOU WERE IN THE ARMY?

A: Yes.

Q: NOW YOU WERE BACK THERE --

A: Back there as a wounded soldier.

Q: -- AND IT'S A HOSPITAL.

A: It was a hospital then.

Q: BEFORE WE LEAVE YOUR INCIDENT BACK WITH THE GERMAN SOLDIER, YOU SAID YOU WERE LYING ON THE FLOOR. YOU WERE LYING ON A STRETCHER ON THE FLOOR.

A: On a stretcher, yes, on the floor.

Q: AND NEXT TO YOU WAS ANOTHER POLISH --

A: Soldier also laying on a stretcher on the floor.

Q: YOU WERE WEARING A WHITE HOSPITAL GOWN OR SOMETHING?

A: No. I was in a Polish uniform.

Q: YOU WERE IN A POLISH UNIFORM?

A: Yes.

Q: BUT A BODY CAST ON.

A: Yes.

Q: THERE'S NO WAY THE SOLDIER KNEW YOU WERE A JEW.

A: No. Absolutely not.

Q: WAS THE POLISH SOLDIER NEXT TO YOU, DO YOU KNOW, WAS HE
JEWISH ALSO OR NOT?

A: No, he was not.

Q: HE DIDN'T KNOW THAT YOU ARE JEWISH.

A: He didn't know, no.

Q: WHEN THE GERMAN SOLDIER -- BY THE WAY, DO YOU THINK THE
GERMAN SOLDIER WAS A HARD-CORE NAZI OR JUST A GERMAN?

A: I think so. He was a hard-core Nazi, this soldier. I met
different soldiers, too, which I will explain it later on,
but this soldier probably was a member of the Nazi party.
I think so.

Q: WELL INDOCTRINATED.

A: Indoctrinated by Hitler. There's no question about it.

Q: AND THE WORDS, DO YOU REMEMBER PRECISELY THE WORDS HE USED WHEN HE SAID, "NOW IS THE TIME FOR" --

A: "Now," he said, "is the time to join forces" -- that mean Poles and Germans together -- "in order to liquidate the Jewish race." That's what he said.

Q: DID THE POLISH SOLDIER REACT?

A: He didn't react at all.

Q: NO ANSWER AT ALL.

A: No answer at all. He looked at him. He gazed at him. He didn't say a word.

Q: DID THE GERMAN SAY ANYTHING ELSE AT ALL THAT YOU RECALL? JUST --

A: At that time, no. It was only a fragment of that story.

Q: OKAY. I WONDER IF NOW ISN'T A GOOD TIME TO GO BACK TO BEFORE THE WAR WHEN YOU RECOUNTED AS A POLISH SOLDIER IN TRAINING THE SONG THAT YOUR FELLOW SOLDIERS SANG, THAT ANTI-SEMITIC SONG. DO YOU RECALL THAT INCIDENT --

A: Yes.

Q: -- AND CAN YOU SING THAT SONG IN POLISH FOR US?

A: Yes. I didn't want to mention it because, you know, I don't know if I said it before. This is a case which will show on the one hand that anti-Semitism in Poland was very popular among some folks or maybe I shall say among the majority of the Polish people, but it doesn't mean that all

Poles have the same feelings.

And this case is an example that you cannot treat an entire nation the same way that the entire nation was anti-Semitic. There are wonderful people among them too.

This was what happened to me personally while serving in the Army. We were trained like soldiers are trained in any Army so every morning we had to march to a certain place where we have our military exercises, of course, and to reach that place from the residential area of our regiment, it was more than two miles. So we have to march and march.

There was always a commander. And this episode occurred approximately two or three weeks prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

While we were marching the officer ordered the company to sing. Well, we started to sing several songs, military songs, of course, and I did sing also. All of a sudden while marching they began to sing a song which I cannot forget and I'm going to sing that song.

C Warshawy poedem do Berlina

C Warshawy poedem do Berlina

Udushich Hitlera skurvisyna

Udushich Hitlera skurvisyna

This was okay. Now, the second part. Before I'm

going to sing the second part I have to clarify something.
The main street in the city of Lodz was named Piotrkofska.
This was the largest street in Lodz.

Now when this is clarified I'm going to sing the
second part of it.

C Berlina povrutim na Piotrkofskou

C Berlina povrutim na Piotrkofskou

Udushich holote zydowskou

Udushich holote zydowskou

Q: CAN YOU SAY WHAT THESE WORDS MEAN?

A: It may be the translation will not be accurate because I'm
not a poet and I have never written a song, but as far as I
can I'll try to translate it into English.

From Warsaw we'll march to Berlin

From Warsaw we'll march to Berlin

To strangle the son of --

I don't know how to say it -- how to tell it in
English.

Q: DO YOU MEAN SON OF A BITCH?

A: Son of a bitch, yes.

Q: HITLER.

A: Hitler.

To strangle Adolph Hitler.

Now the second part.

From Berlin we'll return to Piotrkowska
Which is the main street of Lodz.

From Berlin we'll return to Piotrkowska
To strangle the Jewish rabble.

Now, holota is a special unpleasant word not often used in the Polish language and this was done by soldiers serving in the Polish Army prior to the German attack against Poland at a time when they knew that with them are marching Jewish soldiers, Polish citizens, wearing arms and who will probably be the best fighters against the Nazis.

When they completed this song, the officer -- if I recall his name was Kovalski or Yanovski. I'm not sure.

Q: WHAT WAS HIS RANK?

A: His was a lieutenant.

Q: LIEUTENANT.

A: Lieutenant. He brought the entire company to a halt immediately. He put us on attention and then he ordered us to retire and then he gave an order to run ahead. When we run he gave an order to fall. Then he ordered us to crawl and then he ordered us to get up and so on and so on for two and a half hours until he realized that we are not capable to crawl any longer, not to walk but to crawl any longer.

When he saw that all of us are wet, exhausted, without

any physical strength, he gave an order for attention and he asked all of us if we realized why we were punished to that extent and the soldiers responded "Yes, pane poruchniku!" That means yes, we realize why. And he said, "No, you don't realize why. I'm going to tell you why."

And he gave a speech to those people and said, "I don't know if you realize that we are a couple weeks before the Germans might attack us. We are prior to a war between Poland and Germany," he said, "and you know this is going to be a fight which might cost the independence of Poland.

"There will be a lot of sacrifice, a lot of blood, but if we will be defeated, please do remember that you Poles or Catholics have a chance to survive even under the German occupation, but those soldiers marching with you being Jews or of Jewish heritage, they are probably not going to survive. They will perish.

"So, therefore, because they know what the Nazi regime means to them they will be the best soldiers fighting the Germans. And please do remember it!

"And because of that you suffered so much and if this will occur one more time I'll not leave on you one wet thread" and then he gave an order to retire and ordered us to lay down for half an hour and after we regained our strength we marched home to the regimental barracks.

Why I'm mentioning it, I'm mentioning it because this was an episode in my personal life which confirmed to me that although we have been given the privilege to serve in the Polish Army and to fight for the existence of Poland as an independent country, a lot of people in Poland have been indoctrinated in anti-Semitism to the extent that such an event could have occurred in the Polish Army.

But I brought up that moment also because to show that there were Poles who have condemned such behavior, who have condemned such anti-Semitic activity and I cannot mention one part of a story saying nothing about the other part of the story.

You know, at a time when the existence of a nation is in jeopardy, to think about creating a song against people who have been serving in the same Polish Army is at least inhumane and unpatriotic as far as I am concerned.

And after that it never happened again, but in two weeks I was close to the German border.

Q: HOW MANY, IF YOU KNOW HOW MANY, JEWS BESIDES YOURSELF WERE IN YOUR GROUP THERE THAT DAY? QUITE A FEW OR DO YOU --

A: I think in that group about six people, I think.

Q: AND EVERYONE KNEW THAT YOU WERE JEWISH.

A: All of them knew that I'm Jewish. No question about it.

Q: ALL OF THE POLISH SOLDIERS.

A: Soldiers knew because my first name which is now Bernard was at that time Benjamin and Benjamin is not a Catholic name unfortunately and, therefore -- and I never tried to hide my Jewishness. I have nothing to hide.

I spoke the Polish language. I attended a Polish school. I served in the Polish Army. Okay? I grew up in Poland. But I happen not to be a Catholic. I have done nothing wrong to Poland. So I was surprised that this kind of thing happened, although I knew that anti-Semitism is very popular among a lot of Polish people.

I'd like to mention also that the party which was spreading anti-Semitism in Poland called the National Democratic Party called Endetsia obtained over 30 percent of the popular vote in the elections to the Polish parliament, Seim. So this was -- you know, this was a barometer of how deep anti-Semitic feelings were among a lot of Polish people.

Q: WAS IT CLEAR TO YOU THAT ALL THE SOLDIERS WHILE THEY WERE SINGING THIS SONG KNEW THAT THERE WERE JEWISH COMRADES AMONG THEM?

A: If they would not know they'll not create such a song.

Q: DID THE MEN AROUND YOU RESPOND IN ANY WAY TO THE LIEUTENANT'S SPEECH?

A: In the Army at that time -- I don't know how in the

American Army --

Q: YOU WERE AT ATTENTION.

A: We were at attention.

Q: SILENCE?

A: Silence. That's all. You cannot say anything against.

Q: BUT LATER WHEN HE ALLOWED YOU TO LIE DOWN WHICH WOULD BE IN A CONDITION OF REST, I PRESUME --

A: Yes.

Q: -- YOU COULD CONVERSE WITH EACH OTHER. DID YOU HEAR ANY --

A: No. What I did? I decided to approach the officer and to ask him maybe a stupid question, but this was the question: Why did he not exclude us from that punishment because this was not a creation of the six Jewish soldiers who had been marching together. And his response was: "Forgive me, please. You are a soldier in the Polish Army and if I have to punish for this kind of activity I cannot exclude anybody. So, therefore, you have been punished too." This was his answer.

Q: DID YOU TELL HIM YOU WERE JEWISH?

A: Yes, of course. Yeah.

Q: YOU HAD A POLISH NAME.

A: I had a Polish name, yes. But there were other Jewish people. A colleague of mine whose name was Lipschitz, for example, he was also marching.

Q: AS YOU LOOK BACK ON THAT DO YOU THINK HE WAS WISE TO PUNISH YOU ALL OR WOULD HE HAVE BEEN BETTER TO HAVE THE JEWISH SOLDIERS STEP OUT?

A: No. I think he did -- from a military point of view, he did the right thing.

Q: IT MIGHT HAVE CREATED EVEN MORE ILL WILL.

A: Yes.

Q: IT WOULD SEEM SO.

A: Yeah.

Q: DO YOU KNOW WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THAT LIEUTENANT?

A: No. I have no idea. We were separated when -- prior to transporting us to the border he was transferred probably to another regiment. I don't know. Because the one who was leading us to the German border was not him. It was another one.

Q: SO LET'S JUMP NOW BACK TO WHERE WE WERE BEFORE, AFTER THE INVASION HAS BEGUN. YOU'VE BEEN IN ONE OR TWO OR THREE HOSPITALS AND YOU'RE NOW BACK IN A HOSPITAL THAT WAS YOUR REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS WHERE YOU ACTUALLY HAD BEEN BILLETED AS A SOLDIER.

A: Yes.

Q: BACK IN LODZ.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: NOW, PICK UP THERE, PLEASE. YOU WERE IN A BODY CAST AND

YOU HAVE GERMAN GUARDS OVER YOU?

A: German guards, but not inside the room where we were in. There were more than 60 wounded soldiers and also officers; up to the rank of a captain we were together.

There were, I think, a couple thousand of wounded soldiers in the entire building, but I was in a room where about over 60 were. Only the higher ranking wounded military officers starting from major up to generals were separated from us, but up to a captain they were together with us.

Q: ENLISTED MEN AND OFFICERS.

A: Enlisted men and officers.

Q: DID YOU HAVE BEDS?

A: Yes.

Q: YOU'RE NO LONGER SLEEPING ON THE STRETCHER.

A: No. No. Beds.

Q: AND WERE YOU GETTING REGULAR MEDICAL TREATMENT IN YOUR CASE FOR YOUR LEG AND --

A: I didn't need special medical treatment because the minute I had that cast on I felt comfortable. The only discomfort was that I couldn't move. You know, when I was served with some tea or soup and I was perspiring and this was -- I couldn't even scratch myself, you know, and approximately about three and a half months I was in that cast. It was

unbearable, but this was the way I had to live with.

Q: DID YOU NEED HELP TO GO TO THE BATHROOM?

A: Yes, I did. I don't know how they handled that problem.

Q: BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T WALK.

A: I couldn't walk, no.

Q: DID YOUR FELLOWS AROUND YOU -- TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE WERE THERE ANY OTHER JEWISH SOLDIERS THERE?

A: There were a few Jewish soldiers in that area, but I forgot to mention and I'd like to mention it now. When they brought me on a stretcher into that room which was a hospital, fortunately or unfortunately on my right side was a soldier who served in the Polish Army, but his nationality was German. He was born in Poland. He served in the Polish Army.

And, as he mentioned me afterward, how he got wounded, he told me that he wanted to desert from the Polish Army to the Germans and at that time a shrapnel got off and he was wounded here in this right leg. So he became my neighbor.

So you have a situation. Here I'm Jewish and he is German, both of us POWs, but the difference was that he was treated differently than all of us, Poles or Jews. For example, his mother, his family were entitled to visit him on a daily basis and to bring him all kinds of food and cigarettes and alcohol. Except that he was wounded he had

to be together with us. He didn't feel that he is under occupation.

Q: THE HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION, WAS IT POLISH OR WAS IT GERMAN?

A: German. Since then German. But some Polish doctors who happened to be in the Polish uniform prior to the German takeover of the city of Lodz were in that hospital. The next day when the Germans occupied Lodz and took over the administration of that hospital, they changed the Polish uniform into a German one.

They changed the Polish uniform into a German one and I realized later that they probably were Germans but born in Poland and, therefore, they served in the Polish Army and when the Germans took over the hospital they changed their uniforms.

Q: THE MAN LYING NEXT TO YOU, THE GERMAN WHO SAID HE HAD INTENDED TO DESERT AND GO JOIN THE GERMAN SIDE, DID HE KNOW YOU WERE JEWISH?

A: Yes.

Q: WAS THERE ANY DISCUSSION OF THIS BETWEEN YOU?

A: Yes, there was a discussion. This is my problem.

Q: CAN YOU DESCRIBE IT FOR US?

A: This was my problem, that I always was very open as far as my heritage is concerned and, therefore, as I mentioned

before, when my mother visited me again after several weeks in that hospital she was already wearing the yellow --

Q: THE STAR OR AN ARM BAND?

A: Arm band. And when I saw it I vowed to her that I will never wear such an arm band, that I'll do everything in my power not to wear that sign on my arm. And this was my approach; that if there will be a possibility ever to get out from that surrounding, that environment, I'll try to leave the part of Poland occupied by the Nazis and rather go to the part of Poland occupied by the Soviet Army.

Of course I had information in the hospital that my father and brothers are already on the other side, but they were not confirmed information. I had information, however, that my father and two brothers are already in Bialystok which was at that time occupied by the Soviet Army. And, therefore, having that information I wanted to join them and I also knew that if I'll join them I'll not have to wear that German arm band.

Q: MAY I CLARIFY OR ASK YOU TO CLARIFY. IT WAS AN ARM BAND, A YELLOW ARM BAND?

A: Yes.

Q: DID IT HAVE A STAR ON IT?

A: No.

Q: JUST YELLOW, A YELLOW BAND.

A: The stars, they were in consecutive order. I don't know when it happened that Jews in Lodz had to wear the yellow Star of David on the front and on the back, but at that time -- this was still 1939, the beginning of the German occupation -- what I recall, that she did not have a yellow star. She has a yellow arm band on her right arm. Right or left; I don't remember.

Q: THIS WAS AT A TIME PERHAPS THREE TO FOUR WEEKS AFTER THE GERMAN INVASION. SHE WAS ALREADY --

A: Yes.

Q: SHE WAS FORCED TO WEAR THE ARM BAND.

A: Four or six or eight weeks. To be honest with you I don't recall. She came, she visited me maybe three, four weeks after the German invasion. Yes, she had to already wear a yellow arm band.

Q: WERE YOU HEARING ANYTHING AT ALL ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING OUT IN THE CITY, THE CITY OF LODZ?

A: I had some information turned over to me by that neighbor of German heritage. He told me that the Jews are going -- he didn't turn over to me informations in detail, but he told me that the Jews are going to suffer a lot under the Nazi occupation.

And I must also underline here that he was the one who told me that if there will be a possibility to get out from

that part of Poland occupied by the Germans I'll probably do the right thing. That was his statement.

Q: WAS HE SAYING THIS TO YOU IN A FRIENDLY WAY OR --

A: In a friendly way. We became friends. And he knew that I am Jewish. No question about it. That's why we had this kind of conversation.

Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY OTHER CONVERSATION WITH HIM?

A: We had once a political conversation and this conversation was related to the agreement which has been signed by Molotoff and Ribbentropp at that time and a German newspaper called Lojerfolkszeitung appeared on a daily basis and which was brought by this soldier's mother so he could read it on a daily basis.

When the agreement has been reached and it was printed in the German newspaper in Lodz and there were the pictures of both leaders -- that means of Molotoff and Ribbentropp -- and when he read this part of that agreement and looking at those pictures, he said, "You know, now when Germany is in a partnership with the Soviet Union we are going to defeat the entire world." This was his statement.

And at that time I didn't counter his philosophical approach, although I knew that this is not going to happen. I didn't know when a war will break out between the Germans and the Soviet Union, but for me it was at that time

incomprehensible that those two powers are going to be forever together.

This kind of a conversation with him I had, but it was not a conversation where I could counter his political philosophy. This was his way of looking forward how the world will develop under a German-Soviet rule, you know. He was a proud German probably.

Q: HE WAS SERVING, ALTHOUGH, IN THE POLISH ARMY --

A: He was --

Q: -- TO SUDDENLY BECOME A GERMAN. AM I CORRECT? IS THAT THE WAY YOU --

A: He never felt that he was not German. There were a lot of Germans serving in the Polish Army at that time, yes.

Q: DO YOU THINK MANY OF THEM DESERTED OR WENT OVER TO THE GERMAN SIDE?

A: I think a lot of them deserted, yes. No question about it.

Q: THE DOCUMENT YOU WERE DISCUSSING, THE PACT SIGNED BY THESE STATESMEN, WAS THE NON-AGGRESSION PACT BETWEEN GERMANY AND RUSSIA --

A: Yes.

Q: -- BEFORE THE POLISH INVASION. ABOUT TWO WEEKS IF THAT'S THE SAME DOCUMENT.

A: This is the same document, yes.

Q: WE SAY THE HITLER-STALIN PACT, BUT IT WAS SIGNED BY THE TWO

FOREIGN MINISTERS.

A: By the two foreign ministers, yes.

Q: AND YOUR POINT OF VIEW IS STILL THAT OF PRETTY MUCH A YOUNG SOCIALIST?

A: At that time? I would say that at that time I have a humanistic approach to socialist ideas, yes.

Q: AND YOU HAVE JUST SAID YOU DIDN'T SEE HOW IN THE LONG RUN GERMANY AND THE SOVIET UNION COULD STAY TOGETHER.

A: Yeah, stay together. Yes.

Q: WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT?

A: Because I was convinced that this pact between Germany and the Soviet Union is going to be a disaster for the Soviet Union. That was my conviction. I did not feel that those two systems can work together for a long period of time.

And I thought -- I didn't have anybody to talk to at that time about it -- that Stalin betrayed the Soviet Union signing this kind of agreement.

After I came to America I read a book written by Nahum Goldman where among others he described a personal meeting between him and Litvinof who happened to be the foreign minister of the Soviet Union prior to Molotoff and who happened to be also Jewish and who told him that a war between the Germans and the Soviet Union is imminent, that a war is going to break out very soon and when he'll come

back to the Soviet Union he'll probably be dismissed because Stalin is ready to sign a treaty of non-aggression with Hitler and because he is Jewish Stalin would not permit -- or Hitler will not permit that his signature will be on this treaty and, therefore, probably they'll dismiss him and somebody else will take over his ministry and sign this treaty, what happened, and this is what happened.

Q: YOU SAID THAT YOU FELT AT THAT TIME THAT STALIN HAD BETRAYED RUSSIA.

A: Yes.

Q: YOU'RE A YOUNG SOCIALIST OR A PERSON WITH SOCIALIST IDEAS. DID THIS SEEM LIKE HIGH TREASON TO YOU THAT THE LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST WORLD WOULD SIGN A DEAL WITH HITLER?

A: I don't think that he was representing the Socialist world. He was representing a dictatorship in the Soviet Union upon the people of the Soviet Union. This was my assumption at that time.

Although I must say that as a young Jew having to choose between a Nazi regime and a Soviet regime I preferred at that time to choose a Soviet regime than a Nazi regime. There's no question about it.

Q: DID YOU FEEL YOU COULD AT LEAST SURVIVE AS A SOCIALIST --

A: I didn't know. This was my conviction at that time, that I might be punished for everything there, but not for being a

Jew. Stalin has murdered many people of his own nationality. Millions of people have perished under his reign. A lot of Jews have also been persecuted under Stalin's dictatorial regime. There's no question about it.

But a lot of Jews were in the Red Army, a lot of Jews were in his government and so on and so on and, therefore, this was a special, inhuman in my opinion, system, inhumane system. Okay.

But not specifying, you know, by nationalities that I'll be persecuted only because that I was born a Jew and hundreds of thousands of Jews have saved their lives leaving the part of Poland occupied by the Nazis and having gone to the part of Poland occupied by the Soviet Union. Hundreds of thousands returned afterward and are now in America or in Israel and in many other countries. That's how those Jews saved their lives.

Q: AT THAT TIME, WITHIN THE FIRST FEW MONTHS AFTER THE GERMAN INVASION WHILE YOU WERE IN THE HOSPITAL, WERE YOU AWARE OR DID YOU KNOW THAT THE GERMANS WERE ROUNDING UP JEWS OR OTHERWISE PERSECUTING JEWS OR KILLING JEWS?

A: I heard a lot.

Q: YOU HEARD THINGS?

A: I heard a lot of things, yes.

Q: FOR INSTANCE?

A: For instance, when my mother visited me she told me what is happening outside, you know, the hospital and she told me also that she is going to leave Lodz because she's afraid to stay there. Where and when she left I don't know. My father told me later that she went to Warsaw with her sisters and what happened to her I have no idea.

Q: YOU NEVER --

A: I never met her again. After that meeting I never met her again.

Q: DID SHE TELL YOU THAT THEY WERE PLACING JEWS IN THE GHETTOS OR --

A: No. There was no ghetto at that time.

Q: AT THAT TIME.

A: No.

Q: WHAT WERE THEY DOING TO JEWS OUTSIDE?

A: For example, I was told by my mother of a fact that a Chassidic Jew walked out on the street dressed differently with a beard, with --

MS. KERNAN: CURLS.

A: And a German approached him and he picked him by the beard and he threw him to the ground and he kicked him and he treated him like an animal, like a dog or something like that. And she told me that such cases are happening on a daily basis. This was the information I had.

But the most important thing to me was not to get back to my town of birth. I was afraid that if I'll come back to that city of Pabianice that probably I'll be arrested immediately and the Germans will not permit me to be able to continue my life any longer.

And besides that because I was always an open-minded person and loving to talk and to discuss and to present my point of view against racism, against anti-Semitism, against hatred and so on and so on and if I would be a witness to a fact that a German, for example, would try to hit me -- because I never was harmed, punched by my father in my entire life. I didn't know what punishing of a child means. And, therefore, if this would happen to me, if this will be done to me by a foreigner, by a German probably I'll react and if I would react he'll shoot me, he'll kill me.

And this was, among others, what give me additional will to get rid of that situation. And accidentally, because I was a POW, reading that treaty between Ribbentropp and Molotoff I realized that I have a chance to get out. When the Germans will decide that I am healthy enough and I can be on my own that they might release me from that hospital and if they'll ask me where I want to go, my response will be that I want to go to the place I

lived prior to the war and this was a lie because prior to the war I lived in Pabianice.

Q: HOW DID THIS TREATY HAPPEN TO BE IN THE HOSPITAL WHERE YOU WERE? IN MOST MILITARY HOSPITALS THE LIGHT READING BY SOLDIERS IS NOT A TREATY BY -- WAS THERE ACTUALLY A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT?

A: I mentioned before to you that this German soldier, my neighbor, has special privileges. His mother visited him on a daily basis. And she brought him the German newspaper which at that time was published under the name the Lojerfolkszeitung or something like that in the German language.

And when this treaty was signed by Molotoff and Ribbentropp she brought this newspaper into the hospital for the son to read it and when he got this newspaper he said, "Look at it. You have here Molotoff, you have here Ribbentropp. Read it what kind of treaty we now have" and "We are going" -- this is what he said. "We are going to conquer now the entire world because there is no power who can defeat Germany and Russia."

Q: WAS THERE SOMETHING IN THE TREATY SPECIFICALLY THAT GAVE YOU HOPE THAT IF YOU COULD GET TO THE RUSSIAN ZONE YOU WOULD BE ALL RIGHT? WAS THERE SOME CLAUSE OR ARTICLE IN THE TREATY?

A: There were no clause, but one clause was that, for example, if a POW resided prior to the division of Poland in the area occupied by the Red Army or by the Soviet military, he is entitled to return to his place of residence prior to the war and vice versa.

If one, for example, was wounded and lying in a hospital under the Soviet administration but his residential area prior to the war was a town occupied by the Germans, he was entitled to return to his hometown.

So, therefore, what I did, I planned prior to everything what I'm going to do in case when the German administration will call me up and ask all the data of mine -- and I realized that I have no documents because all my documents of birth have been given when I was called in to serve in the Polish Army. So I didn't possess anything. And I assumed that I probably don't have anything on record which can show them that I have lived prior to the war in the city of Pabianice.

So I decided to lie to them because this was the only way to get a certificate that I'm going home. And that's what they did. When the German administration called me for the purpose to release me from that hospital I didn't know where I'm going to go, but when they ask me where I was born and when I was born I gave them the right data.

But when they asked me where I lived prior to the war I said Statsia Orany, Lithuania, a city close to Lithuania where an uncle of mine used to reside and I remembered his residential area and his address and I gave him an address which was not related to my residence prior to the war. And believing me that I want to go home they gave me a certificate that Mr. Broclawski is a POW going home to Statsia Orany and all the military, all the German guards had to assist me in getting through the German border to the Soviet border.

Q: THIS WAS IN THE SOVIET ZONE.

A: No. This -- what?

Q: THE ADDRESS YOU GAVE WAS IN THE SOVIET ZONE.

A: This was in the Soviet zone.

Q: NOW, BEFORE WE PROCEED WITH THAT I WANTED TO ASK YOU:

OUTSIDE YOU WERE HEARING THINGS THAT WERE HAPPENING TO JEWS IN THE CITY OF LODZ.

A: Yes.

Q: YOU KNOW THAT --

A: Not only the city of Lodz.

Q: BUT OTHER PLACES TOO. YOU KNOW THAT JEWS WERE BEING MADE TO WEAR AN ARM BAND. IN OTHER WORDS, TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES.

A: Absolutely.

Q: AND YOU HEARD FROM YOUR MOTHER INCIDENTS THAT WERE --
BRUTALIZING INCIDENTS ABOUT NAZI TREATMENT OF JEWS.

A: Yeah.

Q: DID YOU HAVE A FEELING THEN THAT IT WAS GOING TO BE
DANGEROUS OR BAD THINGS WOULD BE HAPPENING TO YOU TO BE A
JEW IN A GERMAN ZONE? WAS THAT CLEAR TO YOU?

A: Not only those facts. I think I mentioned it in the first
session that I read prior to the war Hitler's "Mein Kampf."
I have some paper clips from "Mein Kampf" here too. This
is like a document to me.

Regardless what would happen to my family which was
destroyed completely, regardless that I saw my mother with
that yellow band, I foresaw the tragedy of the Jewish
people at that time. I didn't foresee that the final
solution will be so tragic. This is incomprehensible. But
I did feel at that time that Hitler is going to fulfill his
dream not only against Jews but against other nations like
Slavic nations too. But prior to Slavics he'll fulfill his
dream to liquidate the Jewish people as a people because
this is stated in his book "Mein Kampf." I have it here in
English. If you want, I can read it to you.

And I read it at that time. It was translated into
the Polish language. Not only I read his "Mein Kampf," I
listened to his speeches at the Nuremberg Congress by

radio. I listened with my ears how he spoke to these hundreds of thousands of Germans who stretched out their hands screaming "Heil Hitler." And every speech was full of hatred against Jews, against Democrats, against Communists, but specifically against Jews.

So to me it was clear that atrocities against Jews are going to become a fact of life. I didn't have to witness, you know, brutal behavior from a German soldier toward a Jew because to me this was the philosophy of Hitler's "Mein Kampf."

Q: NOW, LET ME ASK YOU --

A: And not only that, I have to mention here also that when he came to power in 1933 he decided to force Polish Jews who previously immigrated to Germany from Poland to return to Poland.

I had the opportunity to speak with some of them in the city of Pabianice who witnessed what he is doing to the Jewish people in Germany already. So I had enough information, you know, how to behave under such circumstances. To me it was clear unlike to many who did not believe that this tragedy will happen.

Q: THEN WHILE YOU WERE LYING THERE IN THE HOSPITAL UNDER GERMAN ADMINISTRATION DID THE GERMANS EVER MAKE ANY ATTEMPT TO FIND OUT WHICH AMONG YOU WERE JEWS?

A: The Germans did not do it at that time, but I'll also give now an example because you mentioned it. This neighbor of mine, the German POW, he has special privileges and once in the morning -- I don't recall exactly the date; it's not important, you know; it's a fact -- a high-ranking German officer opened the door. He probably was, I think, a major. Higher than a captain anyhow.

And he got into that room, the hospital room, and his first question was "Who of you is a German?" and this neighbor of mine stretched out his arm. He says, "Ich bin ein Deutsche." I'm a German. And he was so happy that he met a German in this hospital and he asked him questions how it happened that he as a German is lying among Polish POWs and he described in the German language how it happened.

After that this high-ranking German officer said to him "Tomorrow exactly at 8 o'clock I'll be here again to visit you and I'll bring you something." Knowing German punctuality I was very anxious if 8 o'clock as he promised is going to be 8 o'clock.

Q: DID YOU UNDERSTAND GERMAN?

A: I understood German, yes. I'm not speaking well German, but I understood well German. And exactly at 8 o'clock the door opened and he entered the same room and he brought a

big package of different things like chocolate; wine; cigarettes which was at that time, you know, gold if one was smoking and I was a smoker.

And he put it on his bed and said, "Here. You have a lot of cigarettes, German cigarettes, good cigarettes. You can share one cigarette with the Polish wounded POWs, but if there's here a POW who is Jewish I'm forbidding you to serve him one cigarette" and he left.

After he left what did this guy do? He gave me a cigarette. Yeah. So this is very interesting, you know. No Jew can have a cigarette given by a German officer, but I smoked a German cigarette.

Q: SO HE WAS AT LEAST AWARE THAT THERE MIGHT BE JEWISH SOLDIERS THERE.

A: Yes.

Q: THIS GERMAN OFFICER.

A: Of course.

Q: THEY MADE NO ATTEMPT, THOUGH, TO FIND OUT WHICH AMONG YOU WERE JEWS --

A: No. No.

Q: -- AND TO SEPARATE YOU --

A: No.

Q: -- IN ANY WAY THERE?

A: No.

Q: EVEN THOUGH ON THE OUTSIDE THEY WERE PERSECUTING JEWS.

A: Yes.

Q: NOW, WHEN IT CAME TIME TO BE RELEASED YOU YOURSELF ARE CONVINCED THAT AT LEAST THE GERMAN NEIGHBOR KNEW YOU WERE JEWISH.

A: Yes. That's correct.

Q: AND THERE WERE OTHER JEWS THERE. IT WAS COMMON KNOWLEDGE.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: WHEN IT CAME TIME TO BE RELEASED WERE YOU CONCERNED THAT BEING A JEW BEING RELEASED TO THE OUTSIDE WOULD BASICALLY MEAN A DEATH SENTENCE OR --

A: May I say something? You know, this kind of German Nazi persecution against Jews was developing systematically. You know, at the beginning there were yellow hand bands. Then there were yellow patches, Mogan David. Then there were other restrictions. Then there were ghettos and so on and so on. This didn't occur in one day. It took Hitler approximately from '41 up to the end of '43, about three years, to liquidate the Jewish people. Yes.

As far as I am concerned the German military was not interested at that time in finding out who I was. To them I was a POW. So they did not, as I understand, do any research to find out if I am Jewish or not.

Besides that, my last name was Polish and my

appearance was a favorable one. I did not look like a typical Jew. Hitler describes a Jew when he saw him for the first time in Vienna how this Jew in his image looks like and I didn't fit this description completely. So, therefore, maybe this was also an element that I could get out of there. I think so.

Q: DID THEY HAVE YOUR ARMY RECORDS, YOUR POLISH ARMY RECORDS?

A: I don't know.

Q: THEY IDENTIFIED YOU AS A JEW, DID THEY NOT?

A: I don't think so. They didn't ask me questions of nationality. They did not. What they did ask me is where I was born, when I was born, where I was residing prior to the war. There were those three questions. And based on that information I received from them a certificate that I'm leaving the zone occupied by the Germans and I'm going to the zone occupied by the Soviet Army.

Q: WERE YOU RELEASED FROM THE HOSPITAL BEFORE YOUR GERMAN FRIEND?

A: Yes.

Q: YOU WERE.

A: Yes, I was.

Q: HE WAS STILL A PATIENT THERE.

A: He was still a patient in the hospital, yes.

Q: DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU THAT HE MIGHT -- BEING A NEWLY

MINTED GERMAN -- POINT AND SAY, "THIS MAN IS JEWISH. ARE YOU GOING TO LET HIM GO?" DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU THAT HE MIGHT --

A: No. I don't know why, but it did not occur to me. And I'll give you another example if you ask this question. He had a brother and his brother was a member of the Nazi party and he served in the Gestapo.

Q: HE TOLD YOU THIS?

A: Not only he told me that, his brother visited him. And once he comes over and he shook my hand and he asked me a question if I am playing chess and I said, "Yes."

At that time my cast was already removed from my body. I began to walk on crutches. And he said, "Wouldn't you mind to have a game with me?" and I couldn't refuse, of course. And I played with him a couple of games and I decided to lose those games to him to make him satisfied that he's a better player than I am. Maybe he was. I don't know. But I did everything to lose the games.

And what happened -- I don't know if this brother of his told him that I am Jewish or not. I don't know. But probably yes. Why? Because when I was finally released from that hospital the German administration directed us -- not only me, but all the released soldiers at that time who were able to walk on their own -- to a camp for three days

and for three days I didn't know if I'll be released or not.

After three days they ordered us to come over to the guard room and each of us received a certificate. And from that moment on I was free to leave the German zone and go to so-called residential area.

And what happened, I'm walking to a place where I can catch, you know, a car to go to the railway station and all of a sudden when I was standing in front of that streetcar this brother of his with whom I played chess approaches me and asks me a question, "Where are you going?" and at that time let's say I was a little bit stupid and I said openly that I'm going home but my home is occupied yet by the Soviet Army. And he said to me "You are doing a good thing because here you are not going to survive." This is what he said to me.

Q: WHICH LED YOU TO --

A: Led me to believe that I'm doing the right thing, that I am not going to be turned over to the Gestapo.

Q: HE KNEW YOU WERE JEWISH.

A: He probably knew that I'm Jewish. Probably the brother told him that I'm Jewish.

Q: HE'S IN THE GESTAPO YOU SAID?

A: He was -- I don't know if he -- he wore a black uniform and

I don't know if this was a Gestapo uniform.

Q: A UNIFORM?

A: A uniform. He was in a uniform, yeah.

Q: PERHAPS SS OR DO YOU KNOW?

A: Maybe SS or something like that. I don't know.

Q: GESTAPO WAS A CIVILIAN ARMY; IS THAT TRUE?

A: This was the --

Q: SECRET POLICE?

A: Secret police, yes.

Q: BUT --

A: He was in a uniform, a black uniform, but at that time I didn't know and up to now I don't know what kind of an organization it was.

Q: DID YOU SEE THE INSIGNIA AT ALL, DEATH'S HEAD OR --

A: Yes. Todkopf. Todkopf. T-o-d. Kopf is K-o -- "kopf," this is a head. "Tod" is death.

Q: AND YOU SAW THAT --

A: I saw that.

Q: -- ON HIS UNIFORM?

A: Yes.

Q: SOUNDS LIKE SS.

A: SS maybe. Yeah.

Q: DO YOU KNOW THE NAMES OF THOSE TWO GERMAN BROTHERS?

A: No.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THE TODKOPF MAN, WHAT HIS JOB THERE WAS IN THAT CITY?

A: No.

Q: YOU DIDN'T DISCUSS THAT.

A: No. Absolutely not.

Q: IN THE CHESS ARE YOU A GOOD PLAYER?

A: Huh?

Q: ARE YOU A GOOD CHESS PLAYER?

A: An average. You know, at that time I was a better chess player than I am now. Now I'm interested in bridge, not in chess.

Q: WELL, WAS HE A GOOD CHESS PLAYER, COULD YOU TELL?

A: He was not a bad chess player. He was not a champion, of course. I was not a champion either. But he played a very nice game.

Q: DO YOU THINK HE KNEW THAT YOU WERE TRYING TO LOSE?

A: I don't think so, no. In chess you can make everything to be defeated. There's no question about it. If you want to be defeated you will be defeated.

Q: AND EVEN IF YOU DON'T WANT TO.

A: If one is a bad player, but he was a good player so I was very happy that I can give up the game. There's no question about that. This was done with purpose.

Q: WHEN YOU WERE STANDING OUTSIDE WAITING FOR THE STREETCAR

AND HE APPROACHED YOU WERE YOU WEARING A POLISH UNIFORM?

A: Yes.

Q: IT WAS CLEAR YOU WERE IN THE POLISH ARMY.

A: Polish Army.

Q: AND --

A: I was wearing that uniform until I came to Siberia.

Q: NOW, DID YOU, IN FACT, CATCH A STREETCAR AND GO TO THE STATION?

A: I did. Yes, I went to the train station and I was with another wounded soldier who happened to be also Jewish. I was very tall at that time. I was taller than I am now. And my colleague, the other Jewish wounded soldier, was a very little one. He was wounded in his left leg and his left leg was short and I was wounded in my right limb and the way we walked together was very interesting.

(Laughter)

Q: WERE YOU ON CRUTCHES BOTH OF YOU?

A: At that time I was on crutches. He was not. We walked together and we got into a train and --

Q: DID YOU HAVE MONEY YET?

A: Money?

Q: YES.

A: I had ten zlotys. At that time 10 zlotys -- I don't recall how was a zloty against the dollar. I think it was about

2.50. That means I had about \$4 in my wallet, yes.

Q: WAS THIS FROM YOUR ARMY PAY?

A: No. This was from my father who brought me prior to the war a couple zlotys saying "Maybe sometimes you will need a few zlotys so just in case have it." This was his present to me prior to the war and I had it.

Q: DID YOU GET ANY ARMY PAY AFTER YOU WERE WOUNDED AT ALL?

A: No. Nothing.

Q: SO IF YOU HAD MONEY, OKAY, BUT YOU DIDN'T GET ANY MORE PAY --

A: Absolutely not. Not only we didn't get any pay, the way we were treated by the Germans in the hospital was miserable. Besides, the way we were fed was terrible.

Q: DESCRIBE THAT. WERE YOU STARVED OR BEING STARVED?

A: I was not starving because, you know, the population, especially the students, of the city of Lodz were entitled to visit the wounded people in the hospital once a week on Sundays in the afternoon and they have been coming on a weekly basis once a week bringing a lot of good food. And this was our support.

So if I received a certain amount of food on a Sunday as a support to the other meals received from the Germans I could survive and not starve. Otherwise it was terrible.

Q: DID YOU RECEIVE SUCH VISITORS?

A: Yes, we received -- they visited all of us, not only me.

Q: NOT YOU SPECIFICALLY.

A: No.

Q: DID THEY TREAT THE JEWISH SOLDIERS ANY DIFFERENTLY THAN THE OTHER FOLKS?

A: They didn't know probably that there are Jews among us. They didn't ask, no.

Q: IF YOU HAD DEPENDED ON GERMAN FOOD WOULD THAT HAVE BEEN ENOUGH?

A: I must say that it was not enough, but was it enough to survive, yes, it was. That's all. It was not enough to live, but it was not enough to die.

Q: NOW, ABOUT WHEN DID YOU LEAVE THE HOSPITAL? DO YOU REMEMBER APPROXIMATELY?

A: Yes, I do remember. It was on the 19th or the 20th of December 1939 and then we were three days in a camp. On the 23rd of December 1939 -- that means two days prior to Christmas Eve -- I went from Lodz to Warsaw and from then on I tried to get to the German border.

Q: BY THAT YOU MEAN THE GERMAN-RUSSIAN BORDER?

A: German-Russian border which was separated by a neutral zone of about six, seven miles. But I'd like to mention here something, what kind of event I experienced in a train going from Koluszki to Warsaw.

I got into the train in Lodz assuming that I'm going to Warsaw and from Warsaw I wanted to take a train to the German border. But I don't know for what reason, the train came to a halt at a little station called Koluszki, K-o-l-u-s-z-k-i.

The Germans stopped the train and forced all passengers to get out so I had no choice and I got out from the train on crutches and it was already the 23rd of December, winter, snow, frost, cold and I couldn't stand on my crutches so I laid down on that snow. And I was waiting for another train to come which will take us to Warsaw and being on the ground I heard that a train is arriving.

And the train stopped. A lot of passengers -- because a train was emptied before and everybody was waiting for that other train a lot of passengers and they are getting into the cars, but I was not able to get into a car because I didn't have the strength to push myself into it on crutches. So I thought probably I'm not going to come to Warsaw.

All of a sudden in front of me a car which was numbered Class Number 1 -- because in Europe, probably here too, number 1, number 2, number 3 means better, worse and so on conditions. And the window was open and from that window Germans were looking at us and they were in

uniforms, but they have signs called heimver. I didn't know what heimver is, but I translated from German into Polish that heimver means that these people are like the National Guard in the USA, heim-domestic.

So now I was in a situation of not knowing what to do. I cannot get into a normal car. Here there are Germans in a first class car. How to approach them I didn't know. And besides that my colleague, that little guy, has an appearance like not one Jew but three. There are some like that. And I said, "My gosh, if he'll come with me they might recognize that he is Jewish."

So I said to him, "Listen. What I'm going to do now is that I'm not going to talk to them in German because they might realize that if I'm speaking German I might not be a Pole so, therefore, the best thing is to present to them the certificate signed by the German administration and then find out if they'll permit us to get into that car or not."

I stretched out my left arm and presented this certificate printed in the German language for him to read it. And when he realized that I am a Polish POW going home he said, "We have two places empty here, but I cannot let you in now, but when the other people will departure from here I will open the door and I'll let both of you in."

Q: THIS IS THE CONDUCTOR OR THE --

A: No, no, no. There were two -- they were German --

Q: WHOM WERE YOU SHOWING THE DOCUMENT?

A: The German heimver soldiers. Before we got into the car I told my colleague, "Listen. If we will get into this car try to pretend that you are sleepy. Cover your face so they will not look at you and the rest leave to me."

And this is what happened. They opened the door and they let us in and he fell asleep and I was having a conversation with those Germans.

What I did also, I discuss with them using only the Polish language and they responded to me in the German language. They were very anxious to know why and how I do understand German and I told them the truth, that I learned in the grammar school for three years the German language and I worked with Germans and I had neighbors who were German; therefore, I understand German, but I don't speak the German language.

And then I asked them -- I was also anxious to know how it comes that they understand the Polish language and they answered me that they were residing close to the Polish border. They were from Silesia and, therefore, although they are Germans they have contact with Poles and they understand Polish.

So we have been riding this train to Warsaw and in that car was also a woman who happened to be not Jewish but Polish and she spoke a beautiful German language. She described to them how it comes that she knew the German language. But this woman was not going directly to Warsaw but she got off a couple stations prior to Warsaw. She left probably for her hometown or who knows.

Finally when she left and she was not more in that car and the train began to run one of the Germans asked me, "Wasn't she Jewish?" and I had to confirm that she is a hundred percent Polish girl, not a Jewish girl. He did not have any doubt that he is speaking to a Jew asking him to confirm if she was not Jewish.

Not only that. When the train approached Warsaw, he said to me, "You know, Warsaw has been bombarded and destroyed, but this is not our fault. This is the fault of your government which didn't give up the city on time. We had no other choice," he said.

Yeah. But finally we got out from that car and it was on the eve prior to Christmas or two days, anyhow, very close to Christmas and those Germans are shaking my hand and turning over greetings to me with health and so on and Merry Christmas in the German Language. Yeah. Frohliche Weihnachten.

And I thought if you would know at this moment with whom you are talking, probably you will get out your gun and shoot him. But he didn't realize, you know. He thought that I am a Polish POW and that was it.

But at that station in Warsaw I witnessed directly for the first time what is going on under the Nazi occupation in Warsaw. They were separating on that station Jews to the right, Poles to the left and we as POWs received special treatment. We got through the guards not being checked at all, only showing them the certificates.

At the same time I witnessed how they treated the Jewish people who were separated from the Poles. They beated and tortured them on that station and I was witnessing this on that station in Warsaw.

Q: THESE PEOPLE WERE WEARING THE YELLOW --

A: Oh, yes.

Q: -- ARM BAND. AND THIS WAS THE GERMAN ARMY OR WAS IT LIKE THE SS OR DO YOU KNOW?

A: I don't know. I think it was either the Army or SS. I don't know. They were Germans.

Q: THE UNIFORMS DO YOU REMEMBER?

A: No, I don't remember.

Q: NOW, THERE YOU ARE IN WARSAW AND YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY UP TO SOMEPLACE NEAR LITHUANIA --

A: Yes.

Q: -- IN THE RUSSIAN --

A: No, no. This was the place I have given to the German authorities that this is the place I am going to. But in reality I wanted to go to Bialystok where I had information that my father and brothers are there.

Q: YOU WANTED TO GO TO BIALYSTOK.

A: Yes. Bialystok.

Q: SO THERE YOU ARE ON THE PLATFORM. WHAT DID YOU DO?

A: Well, it was not easy, you know. I'm in Warsaw. It's nighttime.

Q: DO YOU STILL HAVE MONEY OR ARE YOU --

A: Just a few zlotys, yes. But not enough, you know, to go to a hotel or something like that. But finally we approached a Polish police station, Because we were dressed in Polish military uniforms we asked the police guard if he can give us a place to be overnight and he said he'll ask the chief of the police station if we can sleep at that station and --

Q: IN A JAIL CELL?

A: Huh?

Q: IN A JAIL CELL?

A: No. This was a police station. A Polish police station.

Q: WHERE WOULD YOU SLEEP THERE?

A: I was called in and I slept inside on the floor. Yeah. On the floor for one night. The next day we got up in the morning and we got out from that police station and the Polish policeman who was guarding that station asked us "Where are you going?" and I responded that we are going to the Soviet Union. And he said -- this is also very interesting. And he said -- and I cannot forget it. "Go. Go there. You will become commissars in the Soviet Union." This was how he treated us at that particular time, assuming that if we are going to the Soviet Union we are not Poles but Jews and if we are Jews, we are going to become commissars in the Soviet Union.

This was the last contact I had with the Poles in 1939 and then we took a train and we came to the German-Soviet border.

Q: DID YOU HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY THE TICKET?

A: I didn't have to pay for tickets. This was -- I didn't mention it before. This certificate gave us the permission to use all kind of transportation not paying for it. So I didn't have to have money to go there.

This was what the Germans have stated, that I can use all kind of transportation showing that certificate so I didn't have to pay anything.

The first time I had to pay something was when I was

finally in the Soviet zone. But this is a different story.

MS. KERNAN: SO YOU'RE MAKING THIS JOURNEY
AND FROM THE TIME YOU LEFT THE HOSPITAL TO THE TIME YOU GOT
TO THE RUSSIAN BORDER WAS HOW MANY DAYS?

A: Huh?

MS. KERNAN: HOW MANY DAYS?

A: From the time I left --

MS. KERNAN: LEFT THE HOSPITAL.

A: From the hospital to the Russian border it took me four or
five days altogether.

MS. KERNAN: SO WHEN YOU WERE IN THE CAMP,
THEY FED YOU IN CAMP.

A: Yeah. Also not to survive, not to live, but --

MS. KERNAN: BUT WHILE YOU WERE ON THE TRAIN
AND WHEN YOU WERE NOT IN THE CAMP WHAT DID YOU DO FOR FOOD?

A: What I did for food? I had something with me. I bought
for a few zlotys something. I bought more than a pound of
sugar. I bought bread, rye bread, which cost a few
groschen. And this I carried with me and this was the way
I lived until I came to Bialystok.

MS. KERNAN: BREAD AND SUGAR.

A: Bread and sugar and a few zlotys and that's all.

MS. KERNAN: LIKE GRANULATED SUGAR?

A: Yes. Granulated sugar.

MS. KERNAN: WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE SUGAR?

A: I don't know. I really don't know.

MS. KERNAN: I UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE BREAD.

A: No. Bread -- you know, if you don't have bread and butter -- I was a lover of sugar as a young child. I loved sweet things. And, therefore, this was my imagination. If I'll have enough sugar, enough bread I'll survive a couple days.

In the camp I was fed by the Germans. It was only in the transitional time when I had to feed myself with something.

And I have to mention here also that when I got through the German border finally and I was in the so-called neutral zone which separated the Soviet border from the German one a new difficult problem occurred. It was very easy to get rid of the Germans at that time, but it was not so easy to get into the Soviet territory. Oh, no. Even if you have that German permission.

But this permission was signed by the Germans, by the Nazi administration of the hospital which was not a document to be honored by the Soviet guards, border guards. They dismissed it immediately. I couldn't get into the Soviet territory. This is a special story. But I got in finally. That is another story.

But when we got close into the Soviet occupied zone, the Soviet territory, and we were a couple feet inside the Soviet territory we heard shooting -- "we," that means my friend and myself -- and we heard dogs running in our direction and we heard the Russian language.

MS. KERNAN: WHICH YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND.

A: I did not, but I did understand stoj because stoj in Polish is "Halt." I did understand stoj so we didn't move any further.

In a few minutes, you know, those Russian soldiers approached us and when I saw these Russian Soviet soldiers at that time and the way their rifles look like I said, "This is the Red Army?" I couldn't believe this is the Red Army. But when they met us the only thing I understood at that time was vernites. Vernites. That means go back. Because the rifles were directed against us so I understood that they were not going to let us enter the territory, that we had to go back to the neutral zone.

So I began to discuss with them -- this was a conversation on my part in the Polish language. They didn't understand anything. And they tried to explain to me in the Russian language which I didn't understand either. But I said that I'm Jewish and that word -- I know at that time that a Jew in Russian is evrey. I cannot go

back to the Germans.

It didn't appear to them that they should let us enter the Soviet territory. They turned us back to the neutral part of that territory. We went back and we entered a farmhouse. The farmer and his wife assumed that we are Polish POWs. They fed us with milk, bread and butter and so on and we were sitting there until dawn.

When it became dark I said to my comrade "Let's try again" and we decided to walk into the Soviet territory again and we walked about a kilometer -- that means more than a half a mile -- and we were positive that everything is going fine.

All of a sudden up there on the hill a Soviet guard was walking back and forth. And he saw us and he said, "Please come over" and we crawled up to this hill and then he asked us "What are you doing here?" and we said -- we present again this certificate written in the German language. He couldn't read. The only thing he said, "If this permit," he said, "will be signed by Stalin I will permit you to go farther. But this is signed I don't know by whom. By a German. I don't respect it." And he asked us to return, to go back. And we had to go back.

We went back and as soldiers we know how to hide ourselves behind trees and we laid down under a tree

observing him and when he -- because it was cold -- entered his guardhouse, we decided to get through this place. We got through. And we met one who probably was dealing with people who are running away from the other side. So he asked us where we are from, where are we going and we told him that we are going to Bialystok. He said, "Until you go to Bialystok let's come over to me" and he said, "If you have something or money or something else I'll transfer you to the first station on the Soviet territory and from there you'll take a train and go to Bialystok."

Not having any money, please do realize that, so what I did, I had at that time in my possession a couple zlotys left. I gave it to him. The only thing I had is a piece of bread and still that sugar and that's the way I came to Bialystok.

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[END OF VIDEOTAPE]