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10 seconds, Peggy. [INAUDIBLE] OK.

We're interviewing Abraham Grossman. It is April 26, 1991. We're interviewing him for the Holocaust Oral History Project at Temple Beth Sholom. My name is Peggy Coster, and with me is Tanya Zatkin. OK, could you start by saying where you were born and when you're born? And spell out the name, if you can.

My name is, as you mentioned, is Abraham Grossman. But I was not born Abraham Grossman. But I was born with the name of Adolf Everybody calls me Ali, so when I came to Israel in 1948, I changed my name to Abraham, because Adolf wouldn't go very well along.

I was born in a small town in Germany in the province of Mecklenburg. The town is called GÃ¼strow, a very small town of about 25,000 inhabitants. In fact, I was back in GÃ¼strow about nine months ago, and nothing has really changed. Even the population has remained at the same number of people. I grew up in GÃ¼strow to the age of 11, and then I left it. But I'd like to come to that a little bit later.

My parents were born in Warsaw, in the capital city of Poland. And my father emigrated in the '20s to that town. And I'd like to go into how he decided to go into Germany. What I know was my parents never really spoke about their past. Apparently, their past was something they didn't like to speak about.

But from a sentence here and a remark there, I gleaned certain facts, how they came into Germany. We had a distant relative who served in the Russian army in the First World War. And he was incarcerated in a prisoner of war camp next to that town, GÃ¼strow. And when he was released, he decided to stay in the town and not return to Warsaw.

So he notified by post, I suppose, my parents that a good living was to be made in the town, much better than in poverty-stricken Poland. So one day, my grandfather, my father's father, my paternal grandfather-- he was a glazier. And he used to go through the streets of the city repairing window panes.

So one day, a shegetz, a gentile person, came and beat him up and broke all his panes. My father, hearing of it, went after the shegetz and beat him so much that he thought he had killed him. Feeling retribution, he decided to leave, that very night, Poland. And he crossed the border into Germany. Soon after that, he made a little bit of money, and he brought my mother over. And they were married then in GÃ¼strow.

I had two brothers and one sister. I was the youngest son. There was Jacob, there was Bernard, and Adolf-- that is me-- I was the youngest son. And then, a few years later, to the joy of my father, a girl was born, and her name was Tzili. Unfortunately, her fate was to die in Auschwitz.

I went to school, to a German school. There were-- I don't recollect. There must have been about 20 to 25 children, Jewish children. But in my class, I was the only one except a distant-related cousin of mine. We were the only two in the same class.

I grew up in-- it was before the advent of the National Socialist Hitler, when he came to power in 1933. A natural playful child, I had absolutely no apprehensions or no fright. And I grew up playfully, and I played with gentile mates. And I can't say that I felt any kind of discrimination against me whatsoever.

Opposite us, there was a bar which was patronized by the population. And it was full to capacity every night and drinking and singing, and it was joyful. And I used to, very often, stand in the entrance of that bar and had a look inside what was going on. It was a kind of a game.

There was an old man. He had a parrot. And I remember it because, when I went back nine months ago, the kind of remembrance, to me, it's important. I don't know whether, to this particular talk, it has any relevance. But it's so important to me that I would like to mention it.

There was a kind of an alleyway we used to play in. And every time we passed the door of this lonely old man, the

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parrot used to shout in perfect German, "Halt. Who goes there? Halt. Who goes there?"

From time to time, the man used to call me in, and I used to run errands for him. And he used to reward me always with some sticky candies and some few pfennigs. And so we grew up till the advent of the National Socialists, when they came to power in 1933. Things started to change.

Suddenly, the people who used to come into our house and in our shop-- by the way, my father opened a shop where he sold everything from buttons to watches and shoes and coats, kind of a super shop. Everything was sold to the populace. And there were lots of farms around our town and their laborers. And that's how my father made a living, and he made quite a decent living, because he, in the end, purchased a house. And then he purchased a second one.

And when the Nazis came to power, things started to change. Those people I had associated with suddenly started-- kind of a metamorphosis overcame them. They became terrible, terrible antisemites suddenly. In my childish mind-- here I was, 11 years old-- I couldn't make out why suddenly people should change in such a manner, why suddenly they hated us.

And the word of "Jew" and sau Jude," which means "pig Jew," was thrown around easily at us. I couldn't make it out why suddenly my friends didn't speak to us any longer. But opposite us lived a man. His name was [Personal name] and he had a bicycle repair shop. And he was a communist. And his son was ostracized by his gentile friends, so he played always with us.

In fact, when I went back nine months ago to the town, I met him. And we exchanged lots of memories. He had lots of knowledge which I remembered, but I didn't think that he could ever remember them, because they were important and relevant to me. But he remembered everything, and that amazed me.

So he used to play with us. And we used to do a lot of tricks. And we had a synagogue, a very nice synagogue, which served not only the town but all the smaller towns and the villages where Jews lived. It served those people, and especially on the High Holy Days. They all used to come in order to take part in the services.

And the cantor, his name was Blumenfeld. I remember him very well. He was a small kind of a man. And he used to be, also, the shochet. And he used to teach us how to read the prayer book. And I had an incident with the man from time to time.

He had a very broad finger. And when he wanted me to read a word, he used to put his finger on the word. And I invariably got the wrong word. And that annoyed him. He took it as a personal offense.

And any time I read the wrong word, he used to take a ruler, and he used to slap me across the knuckles. I took it very badly. I couldn't make out why he would do such a thing. But as things go, things pass. So I forgave him, and he forgave me. Things were OK with him.

But I remember my mother used to send me with a chicken to be slaughtered, to the shochet. He was the shochet. and I remember he used to come down with a big sort of dressing gown reaching down to his ankles. And he had a fez on his top and a pompom. And he had Meerschuam pipe clenched between his teeth which reached down to the ground. And that's how he used to come down to kill the chicken.

So he had a kind of a beautiful case inlaid with purple velvet. And there was a big, huge shiny knife in there. And I handed him the chicken, and he took the chicken, and he put the knife in his mouth with the dull edge first. And then he took the chicken, and he pulled the head back of the chicken. And he felt it all over for blemishes.

Finding none, he took the knife, and with one swift stroke, he cut the throat of the chicken and threw into the next bush. And the chicken used to run, cawing at the top of his voice, run around, run around till it fell and breathed its last.

So I used to take the chicken home to my mother. And she-- it was [LAUGHS] rather shocking to me. But then I ate the foods my mother made of this chicken, so I soon forgot about these incidents.

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In 1936, my father got ill. And he died. So my mother decided to send me to a-- no, I must go back a little bit in school. We had a teacher. His name was Kruger. And he was an art teacher. And he had a pronounced limp. And he always maintained that the war was caused by the Jews. And he, in his demeanor, in his behavior towards us two pupils in that class was something outrageous. The man was something terrible.

Anyway, one day in 1933, when a teacher used to come into the class, all the children used to get up and say, good morning, herr teacher. He never used to get up, and he used to say, morning, sit down. One day, he comes in, and he had a uniform on of the Brownshirt, of the SA. And he lifted his hand in a Nazi salute, and he shouted heil Hitler. And from that day on, everybody got up. And he told them when he said, heil Hitler, everybody say, heil Hitler.

One day, my mother went to Poland, to Warsaw, to visit her folks, her parents and her sisters and brothers. I had never known them. In fact, I didn't know anybody. But she went, and she went to visit her parents. And when she came back after a few weeks, she brought lots of beautiful Jewish food with her.

And we enjoyed all that food, especially she bought a salami along. And I loved that salami. It was full of garlic, knoblauch It was wonderful. I loved that garlic and I loved that sausage. It was wonderful.

Anyway, my mother made sandwiches, wrapped them up in cellophane and gave it to me, And I took it to school. I put it under my desk. And that morning, Kruger came in, and he said, heil. And he couldn't finish his word. He couldn't finish "Hitler." He smelled the garlic.

And he said-- in German, it's knoblauch-- he said, knoblauch, knoblauch. Oh my, God, when I realized immediately that there's going to be trouble. So he played a kind of a game, cat-and-mouse game. He went all along the desks of all the children and left me to the very last. And then when he came to my desk, he looked below the desk, and he found those sandwiches.

And he took them by the tip of his fingers, lifting them up, and pulled a kind of a grimace and disgusting kind of a way. And then he took me by the scruff of my neck in the other. And then he propelled me toward the door, opened the door, and threw the sandwiches out. And then he kicked me out. And I slid across the corridor on the floor and I banged my head against the opposite wall.

How old were you?

11. So I cursed him under my breath, that monster. Even at those days, I thought this terrible injustice, this kind of behavior towards a child was not to be understood. Anyway, I went home and told my mother about that story. And she said, come along. And she took me straight back to school, and she entered the office of the principal.

I must, again, tell you, I went back on my visit to that same office where the principal received my mother. Nothing had changed except principal. He was a young man. I looked back, and my heart-- something happened to me when I stood and sat there in that office, and I saw my-- I remembered my mother speaking to that principal.

And my mother spoke German with a very thick accent. Mainly we spoke Yiddish at home, but she spoke German, but with a thick accent, which caused me a lot of distress. I was mortified by her accent. In fact, today, I love it. I like people when they speak with an accent. I love it if they speak with a Yiddish accent. Well, in those days, it was different. The Germans didn't like anybody speaking only hochdeutsch, the best of German.

So she complained. And the teacher said, Mrs. Grossman, you know, we are living in very difficult times. There's nothing I can do. And that's how it ended. There was nothing could be done, but it had some after effects. My classmates, from that very day on, used to wait for me outside the school and used to accompany me home. And they used to chant, in unison, some antisemitic verses. In German, so it's impossible to translate it into English.

And they took me home. And the next morning, when I was going to go back to school, they were there again. They congregated in front of my house. And they took me back to school, chanting all the way, again, these terrible

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antisemitic verses.

It became so bad. I don't know. In a way, I don't feel good, because all these stories, they pale against these terrible with people have passed through in the camps. And thank God, I didn't. My mother died, and my sister died. But I, personally, didn't go through the camps. So these things are small things in comparison to what people went through.

Yet I think, in a way, it is important to tell my story because all this led up later to the most terrible crime in human history in the annals of mankind, that such things, that people could have committed not only to my people, to my family, to this-- I'm outraged by it. It's unbelievable. In fact, the older I grow, the angrier I get. I've been many times back in Germany. In fact-- I will come back to this a little bit later-- I served in the British Army and in the Jewish Brigade. And I was stationed in Germany, in Bielefeld, in Westphalia, one and a half years. And in the meantime, I'd gone back many, many times to Germany.

So my father died, and the business went down completely. My mother decided to send me to the next big town, which is Szczecin, in Pomerania, which belongs today to Poland. It's called Szczecin. It was a huge harbor town-- harbor town, you say? Yeah. And there was a kind of an home for Jewish children, and there was a Jewish school. And I went to school there. And things started, for me, to be a little bit more comfortable because I moved amongst Jewish children and Jewish teachers.

Now, the principal and his wife of that children's home, they were wonderful people. I have to express my admiration and credit to those people. Unfortunately, they are not alive today. But they did emigrate, in the end, to Israel, and I met them there, too. And they were wonderful educators. And I'd forgotten what people were like in contrast to what had happened to me in the school I went to in GÃ¼strow, in Mecklenburg.

The Germans, in preparation for the Second World War, decided to evict all Polish nationals. I don't know whether you know about this. It is well known, because that triggered off the Kristallnacht-- the night of the broken glass, I believe, it is called in English.

And one night-- it must have been about after midnight, maybe 1 or 2 o'clock-- this principal-- his name was Mr. [Personal name] He woke me up and said, dress. I said, why? It's still night. He said, you must dress. You must come. And I dressed. And he says, then you come to my room. And I came to the room. There were two men sitting there. They looked, to me, then I understood that they were Gestapo men.

And I was a small child. And they looked at me and said, this is Adolf Grossman? They expected maybe-- I don't know what they did expect. And they said, you come along with us. And I asked them where to, and they said, you come along.

So we went down the stairs, and outside was a van filled with Jews. Oh, I could hear, according to the actions, that they were from all Ostland, from Poland. And I was very crestfallen. I didn't know what was happening. And they took us to the local police station. And I was put in with the women. I was too small to be with the men, I reckon.

So the next morning, they drove us to the railway station. And while I was entering the train, somebody shouted Ali, Ali. And I looked, and there was Mr. [Personal name] He had come to the station. I don't know how he had even thought that we would be taken to the railway station. But there he was, and he was waving at me. And they wouldn't let him come near me, but he was there to, so to speak, see me off.

Anyway, we were driven to the nearest border crossing between Germany and Poland. And I said it was winter. I think it was maybe September or October. It was bitter cold, and I wasn't really dressed for the cold. And I must have looked a pity sight.

So a woman came up to me and said to me, where are your parents? And I said, I have no idea. She said, are you by yourself? I said, I am. And she said, well, have you any relations in Poland? And I said, I heard that my parents, on both sides, had brothers and sisters and parents. But I'd never met them.

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I do know that they live in Warsaw. I even heard the street they lived in. It was the Krochmalna and the [Place name] It meant nothing to me, but my parents always did talk about the streets they lived in.

In fact, these two streets became very, very infamous in all the books written on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. That was part, later, of the Warsaw Ghetto, these two streets. So apparently, my parents lived in the Jewish section of Warsaw. I understood that.

So she said to me, I tell you what-- I'll say to the border guard that I am your mother. And we'll cross the border into Poland, and then we'll take a train to Warsaw. And then we'll go to the Jewish community, and we'll find out where your relations are.

I do believe that your-- I'm speaking about my parents, but my father had died in '36 already. But my mother had remarried. She said that probably they would be at a different border crossing. And you'll probably meet them in Warsaw. You better come along with me. And I agreed.

So we came to the official on the border. And he stamping the passport, and there I was, across in Poland. So we went to-- there was a kind of a restaurant, a bar, so we sat there. And she ordered for me some cocoa, and I was drinking then. We were sitting there two or three hours, waiting for the train to take us to Warsaw.

While I was sitting there, I made a decision at the age of 12-- I made a decision which-- by the grace of God, I'm sitting here today-- saved my life. I had the impression of Poland through the talks of my parents and their friends and what I gleaned from them. My parents started to work with the age of 11-- three, four in a bed, in one room, maybe 10 people-- terrible, terrible poverty, which I had no idea even existed, because Germany was fundamentally a country where people didn't starve.

There was no poverty. It was a clean country, and people were decently clothed. And everybody had shoes. And everybody slept in a bed and had a roof over his head. The impression I got of Poland, in my childish mind, was a dark hole. It made a terrible impression on me that Poland-- and I had a vivid imagination, I can assure you.

So I went to the woman, and I said, I'm going back. I'm not going to Poland. She said, why? What have you got to do in Germany? You come. And I said, no. I decided that I wouldn't.

So I went back to the border guard, and I spoke to him. And he didn't understand German, and I don't understand Polish. So somebody translated for him and told him that I had had no passport and that the woman had taken me over just illegally. So he started to curse in Polish and told me to go back to Germany. That's what I did.

I went back to the German officials who had dealt with this whole transfer. And I told them I have no passport. And there were another few people who were being sent back because the Poles did not accept them. So we were-- that night, I arrived again by train in the same town, Szczecin.

And I phoned up to Mr. [Personal name] the principal of that children's home. And when he heard my voice, he was full of joy. And he said, you come home towards the home. And I and my wife will come towards you. We'll meet. And that's what we did. And even the rabbi was there. I remember his name was Richter what a wonderful man. They all died, except [Personal name] of course.

Richter died later, I heard, in Lublin-- what a wonderful young rabbi. He used to do sports with us-- such a wonderful man. And to think of it, that he was gassed and killed, it doesn't make sense to me at all.

Anyway, I continue to go to school. And to tell a little bit about the Kristallnacht, how it affected me, amongst those people deported was a woman by the name of Grynszpan. And one of the German soldiers, one of the guards, he pushed her. And she fell, and she broke part of her spine. And she fell.

And then she had a son. He studied in the Sorbonne in Paris. And when he heard of it, he decided to take revenge. And he went to the German embassy. He waited in front. And an official came out by the name of Ernst vom Rath, and he

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took a revolver and shot him. After lingering on for a bit, a day or two, he died. And that triggered off the Kristallnacht.

Hermann Goring-- he was the, I think, the minister of the interior, second in command of Hitler. He instigated the Kristallnacht. Every single synagogue was burned that night. Every single pane in every Jewish home was broken. That's why it's called the Kristallnacht.

And every male above the age of 16 was sent into the concentration camp. And they said that we are putting them in camps in order to save them from the anger of the German population, to guard them against it. But it was all nonsense.

That morning, when the synagogues were burning, on my way to school, I saw lots of people standing there in front of the synagogue. I had to pass the synagogue on my way to school. And I saw the flames shooting out of the synagogue, out of the roof, and hundreds of people standing there.

And there was the fire department, but they weren't putting the fire out. They were only dousing the homes and the property next. That shouldn't burn. But I could see that they were not trying to put the fire out. They saw to it that the synagogue burned.

And I was blonde, and apparently I didn't look so Jewish. So I mingled amongst the crowd. And I stood next to two women, and one of them was holding a little child in her arm. And I looked at her face, and I thought this kind of woman can look at a burning synagogue and not even remark that it is wrong to burn the house of God.

She didn't. She had the face of a middle-class woman with her child-- no remorse, no compassion, no nothing. Again, it made no sense to me that people could behave like that. Even as a child, I could see something was wrong.

Suddenly, I saw a man, a Jew whom I had known, with a beard and with payots, running out of the synagogue with a scroll, with a Torah in his arm. He tried to salvage a Torah scroll. And there was an SS man, really huge man-- a bully, he looked to me-- with an SS uniform and jackboots and cruel face. He got hold of that man, pulled him by the scruff of the neck, threw him down.

And then he rolled the scroll out on the street, and he said to the man, you dance on this. And he took a revolver and held it next to his head. And I was standing there shocked. I was shocked. I couldn't believe it. That I'd never seen.

I mean, I heard the ranting of Hitler on the radio, always Jews, international Jewry, the banks are Jewish, and the press are Jewish, and the Jews, and the Jews, and the Jews. You really could not make out what he was talking about. But I always heard Jews, the Jews. And we were-- we were frightened. It was terrible.

So he took the-- that SS man, he took a revolver to the head of that pious Jew. I don't think he was a rabbi, but he was definitely a Talmid Chacham. He was one of the sages of the town. And he said, you dance. And he put a revolver on his head. And the Jew went on the Torah, and he danced. And he danced like a puppet, stiffly-- like a zombie. It shook me.

And there and then I made a decision. There and then, I became a Zionist. I said, if the Jewish people will not have a state of their own, a country of their own, their own army, and their own government, and to be able to decide their own fate, it can never be. And later on, I put this decision into action. And I did become a soldier in the British Army and even in the Jewish Brigade, although I did not live in Palestine in those days.

So I went to school. I was shaken. I was shaken, completely shaken. And there was Mr. [Personal name] the principal. He was also a teacher, by the way, in the same school. And he said, sit down, children. Don't be nervous. Don't be excited. And he took a book, and he read us a story.

Suddenly, the door burst open, and two Gestapo men came in, took the book out of his hand very roughly, looked at it, closed the book, and threw it into the corner, and took my teacher, Mr. [Personal name] took him out, dragged him out. When I looked at it-- and I adored that man-- I had so much respect for him, and I saw him being dragged out of that classroom. And there was a van outside. And they pushed him and all the teachers, they pushed into the van. And they

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took them to the concentration camp. He was released later.

But why do I say, by the grace of God I'm sitting here, when I made this decision to go back to Germany? Because my stepfather was given the option that he would be released from camp if he would leave Germany within 24 hours. That was before the Wannsee Conference, where the plan was concocted to kill all the Jews. In those days, they were going to get rid of the Jews.

So my father took this opportunity, and he came out of the concentration camp. And immediately, there was what we called the Kindertransport to England. They sent-- I believe about 10,000 children were able to go to England. They were sent to England, and I was one of the children. I was sent to England. And also, my two brothers were sent to England.

My stepfather, my mother, and my sister, that very same night, crossed the border illegally into Belgium. And they settled down in Brussels. Later on, I came with the forces, British forces, into Brussels, when it was liberated. And I went to their home where they lived, because I had received, in the meantime, two letters through the Swiss Red Cross. So I knew their addresses.

So I came to, first of all, a camp in Dovercourt, near Harwich. After a few months, I was transferred to London. And there was another hostel where Jewish children of the same background as me, from Germany, was established. And I went to school in England for-- till the war broke out on the 3rd of September, 1939. And then we were evacuated.

We were evacuated to a small town called Hemel Hempstead, in Hertfordshire. And I was taken in by a gentile family. That was a kind of a plan the British government worked out to take in children, to take them away from London because they thought that London was going to be bombed, which it was later, as we know. And they transferred all the schools from the cities which might have been bombed to small satellite towns where they thought that the Germans would not bomb, their bombs wouldn't reach it. There would be no interest to bomb small towns.

So when I reached the age of 16, I went to a technical school, the old school, and I learned a trade. And when I reached the age of 18, the Jewish Brigade was formed, and I decided immediately to join the Army. In the meantime, I had gone on hachsharah. Hachsharah is a kind of a preparation for aliyah to, in those days, it was Palestine. It wasn't Israel then.

It was on the same system as a kibbutz, exactly. So we were maybe 50 or 60 people. There must have been about 10 hachsharah that. And it was a religious hachsharah. I had a religious background at home, so I wanted to be in a religious environment.

And that's where I met my wife. She was 16 years old. And we became friends. And eventually, we married, but that at a later stage. She was an only child. And I would like to digress, because I am really anxious to tell that story, what happened to her parents.

She was an only child. She was a very, very beautiful child. She had a lovely voice. And she was a very talented girl, although she had never gone to school. And she left school in Germany with 11. I went to school in England for a few years, but she never did. She finished her schooling with 11 years, and that was that. And then she went on hachsharah.

But later on, when we were in Israel-- as I say, I would like to digress a little bit, because it seems important to me to tell this story. A relation of her father came to Israel. He had survived the Holocaust. She was born in Berlin. Her parents lived in Berlin, but things were getting so bad that they decided to go back to Poland to their relations, to their folks.

And they went back there in order to be with their parents and brothers and sisters and so forth. And they went to the same town where this survivor who came to Israel-- I think it was Przemysl maybe-- or RzeszÃ³w. I think it was RzeszÃ³w where they went to.

And he told us the following story. He said that, one day, the Germans rounded the whole population, the Jewish population, up and brought them to the nearest road. And there was a ditch prepared. And they put all the Jews along the ditch and shot them. And they fell into the ditch.

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And this relation who had escaped to Israel, he was able to hide himself in some bushes. And while he was lying there, he was watching what was going on. He saw the parents of my wife standing at the edge of a ditch holding hands.

As far as I understood from my wife, they were a very loving sort of husband and wife relation. And they loved their child, my wife, in an extraordinary way. But it was an only child. And it was a little girl.

And there they stood holding hands. And in my imagination, I always thought that-- I was thinking, what were their last thoughts while they were standing there holding hands? And I'm so convinced-- it's a kind of premonition, a kind of a feeling I've got-- that they were thinking of their child, of Genya. And then he said there was a burst of fire from a machine gun, and they fell back into the ditch. That is the story of the parents of my wife, Genya.

So when the Jewish Brigade was formed in 1944, I decided to join. I was sent to Maidstone, in England, in Kent. And I was given basic training for about four weeks. And immediately-- and there must have been about another 100 who had the same idea as I, to fight Germans.

And we were sent immediately over the Mediterranean, to Italy. I arrived in Naples and we made our way up to the North of Italy. And we saw action on the Senio River, and we even took some prisoners.

And then the war ended. And I was stationed next to the Yugoslav-Austrian border in Italy for maybe three or four months. And then we were given orders, the whole Brigade-- there were 5,000-- we were given orders to move to Antwerp, in Brussels-- I'm sorry, in Belgium. So the whole Brigade, about 5,000, 6,000 men, a self-contained brigade with its artillery and mortars and infantry and signals, complete self-contained brigade, moved over the Brenner Pass through Germany.

I'd like to mention that the insignia on our shoulders was in Hebrew. It said [HEBREW], which means, not soldier, but [HEBREW], which means "Fighting Jewish Brigade Force." And there was a big Magen David on our arm, with the blue white and blue, which later became the Jewish flag.

And of course, I was awfully proud to walk around with it. The badge of shame had become a badge of honor and pride. Very proud, I used to walk with my arms stretched out a little bit in order to-- that was probably a conditioned reflex, just to show that there was absolutely no indignity of wearing the yellow badge. And here I had this golden Magen David on my left arm walking around in Europe, in Germany, later.

So one -- we bivouacked in a little village. And suddenly, we were woken up by a commotion. And I woke up, and I saw a barn burning. And we ran towards a barn. It was straw inside. There's no way of putting it out, and nobody had any intention. That was in Germany, by the way. We had, of course, no intention to put it out, but it burned to the ground.

And then there was-- we had a rabbi with us. His name was Rabbi Casper, and he became later the Chief Rabbi of South Africa. He took all 5,000 men and gave us a speech. And I was amazed at his speech. He said, we should be ashamed of ourselves, whoever did this, to burn a barn down with straw. We Jews don't do these things.

And people shouted, you talk about a barn? While they killed 6 million people, you talk about a barn. I think he must have felt that he had made a mistake. Talking about a barn-- we didn't kill anybody. We didn't destroy anything. We didn't loot. We didn't rape. And it was a barn that went up in fire, so big deal.

And the most amazing thing was that the owners of the barn, some farmer and his wife-- they were pretty young-- standing at the window. And they were shouting and waving their fists at us. And I took my rifle, and I was so disgusted. I was so disgusted I was going to shoot them. But I didn't.

But the urge in me was to shoot these people. They were complaining about a barn? It seemed to be incongruous to me that they I mean -- they didn't hide under the beds.

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So we continued through Germany, and we arrived at the town of Landsberg. I'd like to remind you that Landsberg was a fortress where Hitler was imprisoned in the '20s. And that's where he wrote his book, Mein Kampf, this infamous book, Mein Kampf. And it had been made into a DP camp.

And the whole Brigade-- and I'd like to point out that, in all the trucks and all the tanks and all the half-tracks was the same emblem, the Magen David on the background, the flag. And we went through the main gate, through the courtyard, and out the back. And there were thousands of survivors standing there. And their hair had grown maybe an inch. It must have been a few weeks only after the liberation.

I can hear now how they yelled and how they cried, almost animal-like. They saw themselves on the cars and they kissed Magen David. They grabbed the rifles from our hands and kissed the rifles. Only imagine that they suddenly saw these big burly Palestinians as Jews, singing at top of their voices with deep, masculine voices, just strength coming out of all of them.

This is unbelievable. This picture never leaves me, how they went and they stopped. They wouldn't-- didn't want-- they wanted to keep us forever. They couldn't imagine that suddenly Jewish soldiers with armament, with tanks, with rifles, with machine guns, with artillery, with mortars-- it's an unbelievable picture. I believe maybe a picture should be made of this. A film should be made only of this incident when we went through this Landsberg from the main gate, through the courtyard, through the back.

And while we had to go on-- we couldn't stop. I mean, we had an aim to get into Antwerp, into Belgium. They ran, thousands of people ran after till we saw them disappearing in the background. It left me-- I'm a sensitive kind of person. It left me shaken.

And I had a feeling that Hitler had achieved nothing. He had not broken an iota of the Jewish spirit. There they were. I mean if somebody would be told all the time, you're no good, and the Jews are this, and the Jews are that. And we are nothing. We are dirt.

And here they are, their pride coming out of the very pores-- not denying their Jewishness. And when they saw Magen David, they-- I mean, a question could be asked, where was God? Where is the Jewish God? What did he do? Why did he allow this?

Of course, in the question of faith, it's a dilemma. Sometimes I believe, and sometimes I have my moments of doubt. But I do believe that those moments of doubt are part of the struggle we all go through. I fervently believe in the Jewish God. I have never really gone away from Him. I believe very strongly in God-- not that I'm religious. I'm not religious, but I believe very strongly in God.

Even though, how can I say, that God has done it to us, or people have done it to us, I have no idea. But God didn't help us in those days. Righteous people died. Children died. Women died who had done nothing. And they died. They died a most horrible, horrific death-- not that you get a bullet, and you die, but these tortures, these things they went through.

So eventually, we arrived in Antwerp. And as I told you before, the first thing I did, I went to Brussels in order to see what I could find out about my parents. And I went to the address. And the man came down. He was the owner of the house. And I had taken a person along with me who spoke French to interpret for me.

And he didn't interpret. He spoke. And I asked him translate. It was a horrible situation. I couldn't make-- but I did see the man was nervous. He was shaking. I had the impression, of course, it can't be-- I can't prove it-- had the impression that he had something to do with maybe giving my parents away. I have no idea. Maybe he was he was an informer. I have no idea.

But a man came down, a Jew. And he said, who are you? And I said who I am. And I said, my parents lived here. And my sister lived here. He said, your parents? I know them and your sister, Tzili. Oh, we were in-- I forgot now where they were put in a [GERMAN] in order to be deported to Auschwitz.

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You had such a lovely sister. You used to dance and sing. I said, how did you escape? He said, well, I am a South African citizen-- not South African, South American citizen. And I had a passport, and the Germans couldn't touch me. So I was released. But I know your parents, wonderful people. I wish to go and visit them. I had my first contact and my only contact with my parents.

He told me-- but he said, you know what? You go to the former Gestapo headquarters. They have all the records there of people who lived in Antwerp, in Brussels. So I made my way to that office. And there was the Gestapo headquarters, former Gestapo. And it was staffed now by Belgian officials.

And I went in there, and I spoke to one of the officials. And he spoke pretty good English. And I said, look, my parents lived here in Antwerp, in [Place name] I still remember the street. And maybe you could help me to find out what was their fate.

And he said, what was their name? And I gave the name. And he went along the files. There were hundreds of files. And he pulled out a file, and he opened the file. And there was the picture of my mother and my sister, which I have right here. And he said-- I asked him, can I have this picture?

He said, please. He pulled out the picture. And he pulled out a picture of my sister, and he gave it to me. I said, tell me, do you know, by any chance, according to this file, what happened? What was the fate of my mother and my sister? And I saw a big V in red. He said, this means vernichtung, extermination. Those people weren't even selected-- not right and not left, not to work, not--

Oh.

It doesn't matter.

[? Let ?] [? me ?] [? get-- ?] the tape [? going to ?] start. [INAUDIBLE] the tape to the correct speed. OK, I'd say any time.

Any time I'm ready.

OK.

Tell me when.

OK.

So we were stationed in Antwerp. And our job was now to guard trains, provisions and munition, prisoners of war, to all kinds of directions, all over Europe. So we were in the last wagon. There was a stove potbellied stove in there where we used to make a fire. And we used to make our Army rations and so forth. And that's how we spent time, guarding trains.

So I had a very good friend with me whom I went through this whole campaign with me. And his name was Henry Stern. He's now a member of the kibbutz which I also was a member of. And I was a founder of that kibbutz, which is in the Lower Galilee, right next to Tiberias.

One day, he received a notification that his brother is in the South of France, and he had survived the Holocaust. So he went to the chaplain and asked for compassionate leave. He said, look, that's the only person which has survived my family. I need to go and see my brother. And he gave him permission, for one week, to go.

And before he went, I said to him, you know, Henry, before I left my mother, she gave me an address of my uncle. And this uncle lived in Paris, and he has got four sons. But I believe that they are not alive any longer. I think they also were deported. But you know, if you maybe are in Paris-- he said, I am going to be in Paris. He had to go to the South of France somewhere, Nice. I am going to be in Paris, and if I can possibly, I'll check over for you.

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I had the address, and I gave him the address. And he went off to the South of France and to meet his brother. And after a week, he came back. And he told me stories about his brother which is hair-raising. His brother had a job of burying people, but he was somewhere in Lithuania.

And doing the work there, he had to bury the dead. And the ground was so hard they had to use dynamite to open the ground. And he spoke-- he told to me in detail how he exploded, how he dynamited the ground and how they put the people in. Well, we all know about this. It's not necessary to go do these eerie details.

And so I asked him after he had told me at length about his brother, what he had gone through. I asked him, tell me, did you manage to go to the address I gave you of my family. He said, yes, I met them all. I said, you met my uncle? He was the brother of my father, also Grossman. And I said, I can't believe it.

And his sons? He said they're all there, four of them. And his wife? She's all there. I said, how did they survive? He said, well, he told me that he had gone. He had fled to Vichy France, which was the part of France which was first given independence from Germany. And later, Germany took it over completely. And they hid in a village.

I went straight to the chaplain. I said, I want compassionate leave. And he said, what for? I said, well, I found an uncle of mine, the only survivor, with his four sons. And I need to go. He said, I can't give you leave.

I said, can you arrange for me, on one of those trains which goes towards Paris, of those trains which we guarded also went to Paris-- can you at least arrange that for me? He said, I will try. And after a few days, I was given the job, the task, of guarding a train to Paris. So it took maybe 10 days. It stopped, and it changed and wagons-- and a hell of a journey.

So one late night, we arrived in Paris. And we were quartered in an army hostel, terrible hostel. It was icy cold, and I was black from that coal. You can't imagine. There was no way of washing. You washed in a bowl with a maybe-- on a tap and a faucet-- no way we could really wash. And it was icy cold, but I just couldn't stand myself any longer.

I remember somewhere in the loft, there was a shower. And I went into that shower. And it was icy cold ice. It was January. So I had a cold shower, icy cold shower. I washed myself and I caught a kind of a cold. I could hardly talk.

But I got myself up the next morning with my overcoat, my army overcoat, and put on my beret, took a map of Paris, and walked towards Rue de ClÃ©ry. That's where he lived. And I came to Rue de ClÃ©ry, which is also the Jewish part of Paris, where all the people lived who are tailors.

And I came and I saw Rue de ClÃ©ry, number whatever it was. And I saw an old house steps worn by maybe by the times of Napoleon. They were all worn out, [LAUGHS] really worn by people passing on those stairs. So I walked up those stairs. Suddenly, a young man came down.

And I looked at his face. And he looked like family. He looked Grossman. A very handsome boy, he was the eldest. His name was Bernard. And my father was Bernard. And he looked at me, and he had, of course, heard that I might come because my friend had told him earlier.

And they heard. They never saw me or never ever met me. But they heard that I was existing. And they knew all the names of the children. And I went up, and he made a U-turn and came up behind me. So I walked up the stairs, and I knocked on one door. And a Frenchman came out, and I said, family Grossman. I don't speak French. And he says, upstairs.

So I went upstairs. It was the very top. And there were some rooms, and there must have been six sewing machines with six girls sewing, sewing, sewing, sewing. They were making textiles. They were making something. And there I saw my uncle.

And my god, he looked the image of my father-- the exact, exact image of my father. I looked at him in my heart. And over my heart went, into my throat. I looked at him, and he looked at me. And there was a British soldier in uniform,

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and he said, Ali. And he came in and embraced me, and there was his wife. And they embraced me.

And they were all working. They were all working on sewing machines. And he sent all the girls home. He folded up the sewing machines, and he put them on top, and he put them under the bin. It was so small, you can't imagine where he put them all.

And it was 1st of January, the New Year. And he made a big party for me-- food, and they put big bottles of wine. And they all poured bottles of wine in glasses filled to the very brim. Up they went, and then next. And then up they went. And I was able only to manage this much. And then my head started to go-- maybe this bit.

And then I looked at them with wonderment and amazement how they could manage to drink so much wine. They were conditioned to it, I think, the whole constitution of drinking wine in France, which is a natural thing, though. [LAUGHS] They were conditioned for it. My head was spinning. I just couldn't-- couldn't take this wine.

Anyway, we talked and talked and talked. It was one of the highlights of my life, to meet, suddenly, family that's the only family I ever met. And they were really wonderful people. The unfortunate thing was that all four of them are communists, terrible communists, extremely so-- fanatics.

And they talked-- and there was no state of Israel then, but they talked about the rights of the Arabs. And it really annoyed me. We got in hot discussions and my uncle, in his wisdom, said, look, we will not talk about politics. We will talk about family, anything. And he stopped us talking about politics. It was getting really to a state where I felt great, great aggravation.

Did you stay in contact with this family?]

Pardon?

I'm sorry. Did you stay in contact with these family?

I'll come to that in a minute. I'll come to that in a minute. So it was, again, as I say, it was, to me, upsetting that, after, the Jews won't learn from history. they won't learn throughout history, from the Inquisition to the pogroms, to the very contemporary days, where 6 million Jews got killed.

And they got away with murder. That whole family survived, which is so rare. And I said, look, look-- he said, no, we are Frenchmen. And they talked about French culture. And I said, you have your own Jewish culture. It's very nice French culture, but you have your own Jewish-- I couldn't make it [? break. ?] And then I was only 19. How much-- if I would talk to them today, I'd talk different.

So in later years, they all visited me in Israel. And they became very pro-Zionist. I thought, what about your communism? They used to say, we were young. So they dropped their communism, all of them, and they became, all them, in those days, in later years, all their vacations were spent in Poland or in Hungary and all these communist countries. In later years, they all came invariably, every year, to Israel.

And I mean, there are things to be said about whether they couldn't-- the enthusiasm on Israel was so great that there could be nothing, for them, bad in Israel. And that was, of course, a source of great gratification for me.

Did they tell you what they saw when they visited Poland and the communist countries?

Pardon?

Did they tell you what they--

No, we didn't-- they didn't need to tell me. I mean, [LAUGHS] I knew what was going on in those countries. But they were so imbued with the ideology of communism that nothing could be wrong. Or even if it were wrong, communism

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would be the ultimate aim to save the world and humanity.

So today, we are having a hard time. But you will see-- you will see how communism was going to change the world for the good of all of us. That was the way of thinking. And I remember they took me to a meeting of the Communist Party.

And then my cousin, he was a little bit of a macher, a little bit of an active person in that thing. He got up on the stage and said, I have a wonderful announcement to make to you. And he spoke in French. I didn't know, but my uncle translated for me. We spoke in Yiddish, my uncle and me.

And he said, I would like to tell you that Russia has got the atom bomb. And everybody cheered. I said, oy, goodness gracious. That's what he he's talking about, that Russia has got the atom bomb-- so big deal.

My time-- oh, then we-- so the Jewish Brigade was disbanded. They were sent back to Palestine. I, not being a Palestinian but, so to speak, British, I joined the British Army and was transferred to the Jewish Brigade. I was not allowed to go to Palestine. They were sent back and demobilized, discharged from the Army in Palestine.

And I had to continue my service. I was transferred to Germany into Bielefeld, which is in Westphalia, in Lower Saxony. And again, we did guard duties. But I spent most of my time going to DP camps. DP camps were spotted all over Europe, displaced persons camp, by the Jewish agency, organized in the most difficult way to get people organized in the DP camps and, eventually, bring them over illegally into Palestine.

So whenever I was free, I used to hitch down into one of those camps in order to be, first and foremost, amongst Jews, amongst survivors. And one day, I came to a DP camp. And there were all these lists there of who were in those camps. And I saw, suddenly, the name Eduard Berger. And I knew an Eduard Berger. He was in my class in Szczecin.

He was from a family of very, very talented and bright children, good people. So they were outstanding. So I remembered them very well. There were about four or five children, and they were all rosy cheeked and very, very blond. And so I said, could that be Eduard Berger, the one I know?

And a person passed me, and I said to him, tell me, do you know Eduard Berger? He said, sure. I said, could you tell me where he is? He said, oh, he's right there playing ping-pong. And I saw somebody a little bit stout, blown up. They were a blown up from after the camps until they regain their natural stature.

And he was playing ping-pong with his back to me. It was outside. And I walked up, and I looked from the side. And it was Eduard Berger, my schoolmate. And I said, Eduard? And he turned to me, and he said, who are you? I was in uniform, a soldier.

I said, do you remember me? My name is Ali Grossman. We were in the same class in Szczecin. He said Ali, and he remembered me. And he dropped the bat, and he set on a kind of a hillock, and we talked. And I said, what happened to the community of Szczecin. There was a cantor, [Personal name] He had such a beautiful voice, and he told me the bar mitzvah.

And I remember, when I came up to the read the Torah, I was too short. I was too small. I remember he put a bench under me that I could reach the Torah to read it. That was [Personal name] When he made a kiddush, it was-- and it was a Reform synagogue with an organ. He had such a voice it was unbelievable.

I said, what happened to the community? He said, we were all sent to Lublin and then to Auschwitz. And he told me his story, as well. I do not want to go into the same thing. He went through terrible things. He said, I don't know where my father is, my sister, my mother.

But he says, you know-- I said, he could have a brother, Felix. He was older than us. He says, yes. I said, where's Felix. Well, he went, before the war, to America. I said, he went to America? Do you know where he is? Do you have his address? He said, no.

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So I said, you know, how old is he? About 21. I said, he must be serving in the Army. He must be in the Army, and maybe he's in England. Maybe he-- but how can I find him? I said, look, Eduard, in two days, I'm going to England on compassionate leave. I'm getting six days. I'll see what I can do.

But I really didn't think-- I didn't know where to start. How does one start such a thing, to look for a soldier? There were 2 million British soldiers in England. The island was about to sink. So many soldiers were there. You can't imagine, from all over the world, from India, from New Zealand, from Australia, from South Africa, from France, from Denmark, from Holland. England was full of soldiers.

So I went over on the ferry to England, and there was another Jewish soldier from the brigade with me, and he said to me, where are you going to go? I said, I have nobody. But I used to go to England on leave. I used to go in an Army hospital. And at night, Friday night, I used to walk past and look into the windows. And when I saw candles lit on Erev Shabbat, I used to look in and cry and remember my days I sat with my parents and my brothers and sisters, and we had a Shabbat.

And then I saw-- of course, I didn't knock on the door and say, I'm Jewish. Can I partake in your meal? But I looked at the candles and that was a wonderful feeling for me. That was great gratification to see candles on Shabbat.

So I said, well, the usual thing. I'll go to a hostel. I'll walk around in the streets of London, where I would-- or maybe go to a canteen, or to a, what we call in English, the NAAFI, I think it's called, the PX stores and the American term. NAAFI, well, you know, the soldiers go and drink beer and play and all kinds of things, and music. And sometimes there was vomit. These were the canteens for the British Army.

I said, that's what I'll do. What else can I do? He said, you know, there's a Jewish family in London who only want to invite Jewish soldiers. They made it their aim that any time-- the day, night makes no difference-- there's always a meal for a Jewish soldier. And that's where Jewish soldiers meet-- a couple who made it their aim to invite Jewish soldiers.

So I said, I'm a little bit shy. But he said, no, you are doing them a favor. It's a problem for them to invite Jewish soldiers to eat at their table. I said, well, OK. So he came along. And I was sitting there, very shy. I was sitting there by myself. And the hostess was a woman, was a wonderful women, Jewish heart.

And she saw what I was, and I was so shy. And she came up to me and said, don't be shy. Eat, be happy. You are in family. We're all Jewish and so forth. So I just came out and I said to her, you know, I met a schoolmate. He's the first person, just living being, who knew anything of my past. And I'm so full of it.

And he has a brother. His name is-- maybe he's an American soldier. Where can I start to look for him? I want to help him. I want to bring them together, if that's at all possible. She says, well, what is his name. I said, Felix Berger.

She said, Felix Berger? Three days ago he was here. He's an American soldier. He ate in our house. I said, what? I can't believe it. She says, yes. What does he look like? She said, well, he's a little bit stout, and he's blond, and he's got rosy-- I said, my god, that's Felix. His father looked exactly the same-- light complexion, rosy cheeks, blond hair.

I said, I can't believe. Where is he? She said, well, he was shipped over to Germany. Only three days ago, he came to say goodbye and thanked me for having being in hospitable to him and opening our house, which of course, it is the privilege for us, not for him. He doesn't know that.

I said, I can't believe it. What can I do to find him? She said, no problem. She gave me an address to an American liaison office. And I went there, and I said, could I please have the address of Felix Berger. They looked up. He says, here's hi post office thing. Every army personnel has a hasn't got an address, but a number.

So I couldn't wait for the day to go back. And immediately, I went back to the camp where Eduard was. And I said, Eduard, come here. I must tell you something. He said, what? He'd forgotten. He hadn't even thought that's a possibility, the feasibility, was even remotely that I would find his brother. I mean, that's something.

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I said, I found your brother. He said, (EXCITEDLY) what? Where is he? I said, he's right here in Germany. And here's his address, and I've sent a telegram. I sent a telegram. He's going to contact you. And he contacted him within two days. Within four days, they met.

And his brother had, already, information that his mother and his sister had been saved, and they were sent to Switzerland into a sanitarium because they had tuberculosis. The rest all died. They were a big family. They're must have been eight or 10 children, all talented, all beautiful children. Only his sister and his mother and Felix, of course, he [? wasn't ?] [INAUDIBLE]. They survived.

And he emigrated later to America, Eduard. And I have lost track of him. I would very much like to find him. Again, I don't know where to start. [LAUGHS] I would very much like to reach him.

Anyway, one day, I came to a DP camp, and it struck me, it struck me that everything was organized. There were schools and kindergarten and cultural activities, and there were concerts. People who had been only a short time ago, they were the dregs of the Earth. There were just a nonentity. They were nothing.

this -- and there they were-- as if you were going into a kind of an amusement world, kind of a-- I can't explain it. Kind of a club-- everybody was happy. Everybody was singing. They didn't look like people from camps who, only maybe a month or two months ago, came out of camps that were saved. And there they were, organized.

There was a toastmaster, and there was a-- no, and she was a woman, wonderful woman. She had this number on her arm and so. She was directing the whole thing, introducing and happy, and in a beautiful voice. It was an elderly woman, but a wonderful voice, singing very resonant.

And she was singing, and I couldn't make this out. I thought people would be-- you know, all these terrible experiences, they would be down. And I think they-- and then it occurred to me now, in later years, there are Arabs sitting in those camps for 40 years, and nothing is happening. And there we Jews are up. We are up, and we are doing things. And we are creating things.

Well, what can I tell you? I feel so proud of my Jewishness, just because of this resilience and this courage and this determination. I mean, when I think of my Jewishness, my chest swells. I'm so proud of being Jewish. We cannot be beaten.

All the nations of all cultures of the Earth are gone-- the Romans and the Greeks and the Mamluks and the crusaders. They don't exist anymore. And we Jews, despite the fact that we have been so persecuted, we are right here. And look how we look.

What struck me, that people came in there-- they were strangers. And when you meet strangers, you either introduce them, or you talk. There's one thing they did. They took each other by the arm, and they turned the arm around and looked at the numbers-- a sign of recognition.

The numbers could probably tell them in which camp they were and what kind of work they did and all kinds of things, which I really don't know. And they said, oh, you were here, you were there, according maybe to the size of the number. I don't know. But it struck me as something very pathetic-- that's how to recognize a person, by his number.

Suddenly, I received from my girlfriend, Genya, who became my wife later, a notification that her aunt, the wife of her uncle, the uncle, the brother of her mother, she had survived. She is in Berlin. Again, I went to the padre, to the chaplain. And I said, look, I need compassionate leave. I found an aunt in Berlin, and I need to go there.

And he said-- I don't know what was wrong with him. He said, no. Everything was no with him. I said, look, you're the padre. You should have compassion in your heart. Your Christianity is based on love, on compassion. You have no compassion. We Jews have compassion. You have no-- and he didn't like it. He didn't like the way I talked to him.

I said, look, where's your way of showing me your love? He wouldn't do it. I said, I'll show you. So I stole one night into

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the leave office, and I took out a form, filled it out, stamped it, and wrote down, Colonel Lokshen Kugel. That's how I signed it, Colonel Lokshen Kugel, just to show them.

You know what lokshen kugel is? This is a Yiddish food, lokshen kugel. [LAUGHS] So I signed it as Colonel Lokshen Kugel. It's a wonderful Jewish food. And with that, and I wrote myself out a letter. I typed it out that night. I broke into the-- went through the window, typed out a letter, and "to whom it may concern, this soldier it's on an urgent mission into Berlin. Please give him all assistance." I took that, stamped it, and put it into my pocket.

And that night, I went to Hanover, waited till the midnight train to Berlin-- there were only midnight trains to Berlin, sealed. It had to go through the Russian sector. And I went AWL, Absent Without Leave, just disappeared and went into Berlin.

All night, the train went, sealed, into-- in the morning, I arrived in Berlin. And I had the address of her aunt. And then I beckoned a Volkswagen. And I said, I'll give you 10 cigarettes if you take me to this address. (EXCITEDLY) 10 cigarettes? Come.

I went into this Volkswagen, and he drove to the address. And I knocked on the door. Nobody was there. It was empty. Not empty, it was closed. There was nobody there.

So I knocked on the door opposite, and I said, do you know Frau Tuchman. She said, yes, I know Frau Tuchman. Does she still live here? She said, yes. I said to her, where could she be? She said, oh, she's always in a DP camp in Berlin. It was another DP camp. She had two girls which she's raising, two survivors, two lovely girls. And she's like a mother to them. She's always there.

I said, how can I get there. She said, oh, it's difficult to explain. I said, would you please give her a message. I wrote out a note that I'm the friend of Genya, her niece. And I'll be back at 6 o'clock that afternoon. In the meantime, I went again to a hostel and washed myself and so forth. At 6 o'clock, I came, and there she was. What happiness, what joy in this story she told.

Now, everybody knows what people went through, the camps. I don't want to sin here. But it is worse not to be in a camp. What she did, every night, she slept somewhere else. Once she went to the cemetery next to her husband that died and slept next to his grave. When there was a raid on, she used to go mingle with the Germans and go into the underground, into the subway. Once, she told me, she had befriended a prostitute. So she slept with the prostitute when the prostitute had her business. And she was under the bed.

I said to her, Tante Rosa, I said, Aunt Rosa, how did it occur to you to hide. After all, I mean, nobody could have realized that the Germans are going to do what they did. What made you do such a thing? It always sort of bothered me that by-- after all, they were told they're going to camps to work, so you know what. They never were told that they were going to be killed, of course.

So what made you-- she said, I'll tell you the story, She said, I was alone. I have no children. My husband died after the Kristallnacht. He was released. He was beaten so much, one day had a heart attack and died. I'm here by myself.

So I always was with friends. Every night, I went to the house with my friends. And she had to wear that star, and she had to go to work. And she said she worked so hard with so little rations. And when she came home on the subway, she wasn't able to sit. Jews were not able to sit. Jews were only allowed to stand. They were not allowed to lean against the wall of the subway.

And she said-- she's a little bit dramatic-- she said, I was so tired. I needed to lean against the wall. And I leaned once against the wall for tiredness. So a German came and said [GERMAN] and pulled me away. Don't you touch with your shoulder a German wall. And she had to stand there like that for an hour's journey after 12 hours terrible work with very little calories, little rations.

So one night, she was at her friend's. And the door burst open, and the Gestapo came in with a list. And they read the

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list. They said, down. And the van was waiting. And she wasn't called. And she said, please take me, too.

And thy said to her, you're not on our list. We can't take you. See, the Germans-- we can't take you. But if you hurry home where you live, maybe they'll get you there. So she said, oh, [INAUDIBLE] we'll see. I'll see you. I'll see you very soon. So she rushed down in order to go to her house, in order to be taken to be together with them.

So when she rushed down, suddenly, she passed the door. A man came out and pulled her inside by her arm. And the man said, come inside, Frau Tuchman. She said, how do you know me? He said, your husband. I have a cigar shop I sell cigarettes, tobacco shop. And your husband used to be a customer of mine.

He used to buy his cigars and cigar-- for years. I know him very well. I knew him very well. I know he died. And I know that you're his wife. Please sit down. She said, no, no. I have to hurry, she said.

He said, please take five minutes to let me tell you. He said, I swear to you-- I swear-- I beg of you, do not go. Look, my daughter died in an air raid attack. I have her papers. Take the papers and hide.

She said, no, I don't want to hide. I want to go with my friends. He said to her, hide. I beg you. I beg you. The Germans are up to no good. He didn't say kill. I met the man.

So she made a decision, like I made a decision when I was 11 years old to listen to him. So she stayed with him for a bit and got the papers. And from then on, as I told you, she went from place to place.

And one day, she went onto a farm and spoke to the farmer and said, please, allow me to work here. Berlin is being bombed. I can't stand it anymore. I haven't slept for weeks. Please allow me to stay here. I'll work. You don't have to pay me. I'll pay you. The farmer agreed. A big [INAUDIBLE], wonderful thing for him.

So she worked. And one day, the farmer's son came home, furloughed from Russia. And while they were talking, he was telling all the exploits of the wonderful victories in Russia and how they stood in front of Moscow. And Stalingrad hadn't happened yet.

And he said to her. And he said to his parents while she was present, he said, we are getting rid of all the Jews. That's it. We are-- we are solving the Jewish problem. That was a kind of a German motto, to solve the Jewish problem, getting rid of them.

And she hadn't known. And she looked at him. And he said, what do you mean? He said, well, we are getting rid of all the Jews. We are killing and hanging them. We are just shooting them. So she started to cry.

And he said, why do you care about Jews? Maybe you like Jews? She said, no, but they're human beings, too. He said, human beings? They are vermin. And then she realized for the first time that Jews were being exterminated.

Why did this come up? A very profound question, because I maintained all the time they all knew, they must have known, because they worked in factories. And they were led to the streets, and in the factories also were Germans. And of course, thousands of people must have been associated with the annihilation, the trains, the maintenance, the guards, rumors.

I mean, it is out of the question that-- and there she says to me, I didn't know. I said, you didn't know because you didn't speak to Germans. You were hiding all the time. That's why you didn't know. That's why you had this revelation by this soldier who came on furlough. That's why you didn't know.

But I maintain to this day that there wasn't a single German who didn't know. The only thing is they didn't want to know. The question, profound question, is, of course, what could they have done? What could the Germans have done? Because if they would have helped, in the most minute way, a Jew, the punishment would have been severe. I'm not talking about shooting. That could have been, too-- not only on them, but on their family.

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Another thing-- in Europe, there were undergrounds who fought against the Germans. In Germany, there was no underground. There was only an underground when they saw the Germans were being defeated. And the underground wasn't by the-- the rebellion wasn't by the people, it was by officers who tried to assassinate Hitler.

But the people-- nothing. After, the shame on them -- Germany. Only when they saw that the war was hopeless, then the officers decided to get rid of Hitler, which of course, they didn't succeed. But that's a different story.

Now, this aunt is living. She's very old now, but she lives in Israel. And we always talk about the time when I came and visited her. I bought her food, and I brought-- she never forgets that I bought her a needle and yarn. She never forgot that I brought-- that was something which wasn't there. She could sew her whatever was torn, her clothes or her socks.

She didn't talk about the nice foods I brought, the salami and then the tins and so forth. I brought a lot of things. She was always talking about the needle and the yarn. You brought me needle and yarn. [LAUGHS] Every time I visit her, she tells me about it.

Anyway, she took me to the grave of her husband. And there she stood there, and to my embarrassment, she spoke to the grave, to her husband, and said, look, he is Ali, the [NON-ENGLISH] of Genya, [NON-ENGLISH], the [NON-ENGLISH] of Genya. And he's come here, out of the free world. And you know she talked to him and cried. I stood, as a child almost, 19. I was embarrassed by it, talking to a mound of earth.

Anyway, she said to me, you know, Genya's father, in order to eke out a little bit of a living, he used to deliver milk in an urn-- urn, you call it?

Mhm.

An urn.

[INAUDIBLE].

Pardon?

A can.

A can. And finally, in the middle of Berlin was a cow shed where a man milked his cows. And then he used to sell the milk to the neighborhood. So her father used to go and sell milk. And she said, he owes him money. We'll get that money. And you should know, that money wasn't worth, in those days, maybe 1,000 marks, two cigarettes. It was worth nothing, and he owed him maybe 300 marks.

300 marks wasn't worth a grain of a bit of coffee. It wasn't worth nothing, but a principle. I'm a principled man. So we went there. And when he saw her, the man who owned the cow shed, he turned pale. I don't know why, but he turned very pale.

And she said to him, you owe Mr. Zucker money. He said, yes, but I don't know where he is. He made himself what we call [? [NON-ENGLISH], ?] he made himself out [INAUDIBLE]. I said, do you know where he is? You know where he is. Where all the Jews went, that's where he was.

So she said, how much do you owe him? He said, 200 marks. So he said, I give. I give. So he gave me the 200 marks, which was, of course, worth nothing. I tore it to pieces and threw it in his face and left.

And while we were waiting for the tram to take us back into the western part of Berlin-- I was in the east, by the way, in the Russian Zone. And in those days, Allied soldiers were disappearing. The Russians were killing them. I don't know whether you know that. They were kidnapped. They disappeared off the face of the-- they were sent to Siberia.

I think, to this day, they don't know where many-- I mean, it has completely disappeared now, this episode. But there

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were soldiers who disappeared. Communist Russia took them. I don't know why. Out of malice? I have no idea. They disappeared.

Did they disappear out of West and East Berlin or just East?

I think maybe, when American or British soldiers, they to go into the East Zone. I don't think they kidnapped them out of the West. They just took them. They disappeared. If you look into history books, you will find that I'm correct about that.

So I was standing there. Suddenly, a Russian officer comes up to me. He hadn't shaven, and his coat was very drab. He didn't look [INAUDIBLE]. And he asked me for a papirosi. He wanted a cigarette of me. So my aunt says, give him, give it to him. She was frightened.

So I gave him a cigarette. After all, he was an Allied soldier. He was a comrade in arms with me, so I gave him some cigarettes. A minute later, a German policeman comes up to me with a bicycle and says, [GERMAN], your papers. That was really the last straw-- a German policeman should ask a British soldier for papers?

So I told him to make his way backward. I'm not showing you no papers. And my aunt says, show him the papers. She was still so intimidated-- unbelievable. I said, I'm not going to show no papers. I said, you go off.

He said, if you don't show me your papers, I have to take you to the police station. And there I was in the Russian Zone. And I said, you'll see no papers from me. So he said, then I have to take you in, he said to me. I said, well, you better take me in then, because you're not going to.

So he took me to the police station. And there was a police there. And I spoke in perfect German. I speak very good German. And I said, I'm not going to show no paper to nobody. I'm a British soldier, and that's all there is to it. They said, OK, [? [GERMAN]. ?] Excuse us, please. You can go. So I went.

So a week or two later, I received another letter from Genya, from my wife, that her uncle is in Bergen-Belsen. Her uncle-- that's, again, her mother's brother, another brother. He is in Bergen-Belsen. It's an hour from me. His name is Max. He's living in Israel, too. I said, he's in Bergen-Belsen?

And one day, it was a day later, only I hadn't had the opportunity yet to go. By the way, I had been to Bergen-Belsen many times. I came very soon after the liberation, and still there were things going on-- burials, and they exhumed bodies. It was something terrible. I have pictures, also, of the gas chambers and the crematoriums. I have them here.

So one day, while I was in my room, a soldier comes up to me. He says there's somebody at the gate who wants to speak to you. So I said, who is it? He says, no, he only speaks German. He was also born in Berlin. And I said, who could that be, for crying out loud? Who wants to speak to me? I thought maybe a German wants to speak to me. I have no idea.

So I walked down, and there was a handsome man there. And he said, are you Ali? I said, yeah. He said, I'm the uncle of Genya. I said, what? And he said, I'm with my wife and my two daughters in Bergen-Belsen. Bergen-Belsen had been made into a DP camp.

I said, where were you during the war? I said, well, I was deported to Poland, like me. I made the decision to go back. And then with the German advance into Poland, I fled to Russia, like many Jews. You must know about that, of course. Many Jews went to Russia, and then they were deported to Siberia.

And he-- in fact, they caught him doing some business with either money or bread or food, and he was in prison for seven years in a Russian jail. Seven years he was in for trying to feed his family. But he seemed happy enough. And oh, yeah, yeah, he was so happy.

So I said, you wait. I went to the PX store, and although I didn't have much money-- we got very little money in the Army-- I bought all the things I could buy and bring him. And then, of course, we met several times. I went to Bergen-

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Belsen to visit him, his wife, and his daughters, beautiful daughters, and little children. They spoke Polish and Russian and German. And now they're all in Israel, and they're very well off and very happy, a happy family.

So there I was in Germany 1 and 1/2 years. And in principle, I never spoke to Germans. Germans used to pass me with a Volkswagen-- They said do you want to hitch in town. I said, I'm walking. I wasn't going to talk to any German. In fact, there was a non-fraternization law in the beginning, that Allied soldiers were not allowed to speak to Germans. But later on, that was lifted, and we were able to speak to Germans, but I never.

But I did go sometimes into nightclubs. And the Germans used to come and try and make all kinds of deals with us, for cigarettes and coffee and all kinds of things. And these Germans, I would like to point out, these proud Germans who strutted all over with their jackboots all over Europe, dominating people, killing people, and ruthless people-- they were selling their wives and their daughters for one pound of coffee.

They were offering you, I have a beautiful wife. I have a beautiful daughter. 10 cigarettes, you can have her. And I looked at these Germans. I said, my god, how can you compare yourself to us Jewish people? You were going to think that you are the supermen? You are super?

I was so taken aback. In fact, I was so, in a way, disgusted with these Germans. They were cringing almost. Every time they came, the way, their demeanor, how they talked to me, they used to sort of bow down a little bit. Actually, it was pitifying to see them. There they were, these proud Germans in their uniforms. And in their defeat, they were outrageous-- outrageous. I wonder sometimes what would happen to anybody else if, God forbid, there's a defeat, how people would react. But when I saw those Germans react in that way, it was a disillusionment almost.

Anyway, the time came for me to be demobilized. And I went back to England. And very soon, I got married to my beautiful Genya.

Can I interrupt you? Want to stop a minute?

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