

Henryk Łagodzki
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
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Henryk Łagodzki was born on July 15, 1927 in Kolonia Lubeckiego in Warsaw. He and his closets family were involved in the underground resistance movement. Mr. Łagodzki talks about the establishing of the ghetto in Warsaw. He visited the ghetto frequently and he describes the living conditions in the ghetto and talks about food smuggling and merchandise trading between Jews and Poles. He recalls the capture of his brother during one of the random German raids and his consequent imprisonment in the Oświęcim concentration camp. Mr. Łagodzki talks about the dramatic liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto and recalls that many Jews were trying to avoid the deportation, they were chased out of their shelters by fire and they were jumping off the high buildings to avoid death in the flames. He talks about his own capture and imprisonment in KL Warschau. There Mr. Łagodzki witnessed deportations and brutal killings of Greek Jews by the Germans. He managed to escape his imprisonment during a relocation after the Polish prisoners had rebelled against the inhuman living conditions and against persecution at the hands of kapo. Mr. Łagodzki remembers his fight in the Warsaw Uprising and he talks about the Jewish involvement in the uprising. He then describes various POW camps, such as Lamsdorf POW camp, where he was a prisoner. He talks about making his way back to Warsaw after the liberation and describes the atmosphere and living condition in Warsaw during the first days after the war. He mentions looting and trading and remembers that the Warsovians lived in constant anticipation of war with the United States.

File 1 of 2

**[01:] 00: 42:13 - [02:] 25:33:04
00:18 - 25:35**

[01:] 00: 42:13
00:18

Q: Good day.

A: Good day.

Q: Could you—could you please introduce yourself?

A My name is Henryk Stanisław Łagodzki.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born in Warsaw [Warszawa] in Kolonia Lubeckiego.

Q: And in what year?

A: July 15, 1927.

Q: We came to see you a few months ago and we talked about your memories from the war. Now we are back to videotape our conversation. Could you tell us about the instances when you witnessed repressions against civilians at the beginning of the war?

A: It was like that—that is—before the war I used to live on 58 Śliska Street, apartment 12. I lived on Śliska and we moved out in [19]37 or '38 and then we moved to Śródmieście. This neighborhood was half—it was Polish and Jewish if I may say so. The residents were Jewish and Polish, it was half and half. Because the streets: Śliska, Pańska, and Sienna, were in the neighborhoods—Polish and Jewish if I may say so. And there I started to live. I had friends and I was quite normally going to school together with friends who were of the Jewish religion. That was quite normal, right, and we didn't feel—[likely: any different]. I was born and raised among these youth. And on my street we also had **Heidel**, which was a Jewish school. It was likely on Śliska 45—43 Śliska Street—likely. Nowadays we have Jan Paweł Street that runs here. And we even sometimes walked in there [**Heidel**] and there were these young Jews with side curls [*he points to curls*] and with **krymka** [type of small hat] hats on. They were more religious. And Mr. **Froim** [**Freuim, Freum**] had a grocery store in my apartment house. He was very nice and his little son was younger than me. Next to us on Śliska 60 was a shoe shop and I had two Jewish friends there. Just a second—I forgot what the name of one of these friends was. His father owned a shoe shop, a shoe repair shop. And there were many tailor shops around because there were tailors and cobblers, and merchants. Jews were especially talented in that profession, if I may say so. They liked it the best. There were fewer craftsmen [among them] from other branches.

Q: I understand. Do you remember the moment when the ghetto was established?

A: Yes, I remember. It started to happen in [19]39, after Germans invaded Warsaw. At the beginning the Germans were performing searches, they were going from house to house and checking who lived where and who these people were. They were asking around and it was all pretty general. Later, later they started taking Jews to work, to clean the streets and so on. And we were a little surprised that they were doing that—that they started to

persecute the Jews. And they were grouping them, I remember that here by us on Śliska next to Twarda Street, they gathered a group and they gave them shovels and they ordered them to sing Jewish songs: “Our Hitler swell taught us how to work well, he taught us”— wait—“Our Hitler dear taught us how to”—something like that. I can’t remember it now. But the Germans gave them the songs and they were singing. And it happened frequently that the Germans would walk up to the Jews and pull on their beards. They also cut off their beards and the side curls. That happened very often and Germans behaved a little—not quite right. And later—

Q: Was that happening before the ghetto was established?

A: Before, of course it was before the ghetto. Later they were ordered to wear armbands and later they started to say—to talk about the ghetto border. We were supposed to have the little and the big ghetto. In the area where I lived, on Śliska they planned to have the little ghetto. I was already 13, I believe. They started to talk about the ghetto in 1940 and people started to think about swapping their apartments. My parents worked whereas I stayed home and the Jews were coming to see our apartment. It took place many times throughout the day. I was showing them the apartment and I was asking where they lived, what apartment they had, and in what shape it was. What conditions—I had to put it all down and I was becoming more and more mature, because the matter was serious. Next my parents would go to see their apartments, or not. It all depended on neighborhood and on living conditions there. To some of them I said “no” right away. It was too small or else, or the condition wasn’t right. And before it [the ghetto] was established we had the first raid to round up people to go to Oświęcim [Auschwitz]. I remember it as if it were today. German cars pulled up on Twarda and Śliska Streets and we had no idea what it was and what was going on. And on each—on both sides of the street, sidewalk there were Germans with metal chest plates. They had metal plates on their backs; they were as if German gendarmes. And all men who—they were pulling people out of the stores and apartments, and they were directing them towards the middle of the street, both Poles and Jews alike. That’s when my brother was arrested. He only just returned from the German captivity because he left our Michałowice and he went to fight in the defense of Warsaw. On his first attempt he didn’t succeed but the second time he managed to reach German trenches. He crossed that line, the enemy’s front; they were fighting against Warsaw and—

Q: How many people were taken during that raid?

[01:] 08:59:17

08:36

A: Oh, very many, very many. The raid was also quite long. They were walking along the street and I warned my brother and his friends about the raid. They hid on Śliska 44. If they had walked in the opposite direction—but they went to where the raid didn't reach yet. They walked that way and they went into someone's apartment. Then they walked out, they got there and the raid eventually reached that house. They were in the main entrance and they got arrested. One of their friends, a Jew, was arrested and then my brother and the other friend, whose father was the Polish police leader—and my brother, Kazimierz Łagodzki.

Q: And do you remember how long it lasted—how many cars for example were there?

A: Not cars—they weren't loading them on the cars back then.

Q: So what were they doing?

A: When all were gathered and everybody crossed Śliska Street a large column was formed. How many?—200, 300, 400 meters long. That's how many people they caught and then they led them to the corner of Marszałkowska Street and into Jerozolimskie Avenue. On a platform on the corner of Marszałkowska Street—that means near the Dworzec Główny station [proper name; main train station]. And the Poles and the Jews were lined up on that platform. There they were counted and kept there for some time. In the meantime a Polish police colonel, **Matuszewski** came to get his son but my brother and his Jewish friend remained. He wasn't able to get them out. And that column – [people] from other districts continued to join in—that column was escorted by foot. I was following them to 29 Listopada Street, to the Polish military installation, to the Polish military on 29 Listopada Street, and that was the last time I saw my brother and all the other people who were arrested.

Q: They were escorted onto the post, as I understand?

A: To the post and later it was locked and that was all.

Q: And how do you know that they were taken to Oświęcim?

A: It wasn't known, we didn't know what was going on with them at all. Only later, later in [19]41 the first—in 194...probably [4]1 the first message arrived that my brother was in the concentration camp in Oświęcim.

Q: And from where was the message?

A: We got a very short letter from there. Letters were already arriving from there—he wrote a very short note—a few words and all in German. It was a very short note that he was healthy and doing well and that he was content and so on. Contrary to how it was, in any case. So that was the first message. And that is how we learned that it was a concentration camp. Back then we didn't know about these things. And my brother stayed there until [19]42. At the same time, as I mentioned before, my aunt had an apothecary depot in Warsaw on Akademicka Street 1. Her customers from before the war used to come there and there was also a **Reichsdeutschka** [GERMAN and POLISH blend—a German woman] who used to come—but we didn't know that; we thought that she was Polish. And she found out about it because my aunt was crying and she asked what was going on. [My aunt] said that we just got a letter and that my brother was in a German camp in Oświęcim. And she said: “Where and what?”—“In a prisoners camp”—“Maybe I will be able to get him out somehow.” She didn't say that she was German. She was very, very nice. She was an exceptionally intelligent woman. And—

Q: Do you remember her name?

A: No, I have no clue, I didn't even know—I was not interested because I was too young and later I got arrested myself. And in probably [19]42 my brother returned but he was ruined. He returned and it was probably the late winter of 1942-43. He had to get medical help. His legs were swollen like balloons, his face, everything was swollen. In the last possible moment—because he worked in the river—in the last moment they were dragging pebbles from the river in October, November and December. And later when that German woman started to arrange his release they moved him to a carpenter's shop. There he managed to recover a little—otherwise he would have perished. His legs were covered in wounds; they were swollen and covered in wounds. They were frostbitten and full of boils. They were covered in lumps—I'm not sure if you know what that is? They were caused by frost and hunger—on your legs, neck, anywhere—caused by poverty or so. So—and my brother returned. And my father [was] on 14 Łódzka Street, apartment 7. This was the apartment we moved to. We had two rooms there [likely in the old apartment] and here we had three. My sister and her husband moved in with us there—because she got married in the meantime. And my father started an underground organization in there – Związek Walki Zbrojnej, ZWZ, Armed Combat Association, which was later renamed Armia Krajowa, AK, Home Army. My brother and I, and my brother in law and other people belonged to it. My mom and my father were running it.

[01:] 15:08:16

14:46

Q: Before we start talking about your arrest and your stay at a concentration camp, I wanted to talk with you about the Warsaw ghetto. After the ghetto was established, were you perhaps able to see Germans beat and persecute the Jews?

A: Yes. From the very beginning, I can tell you, because I remember when they started to build the wall. It was built along the Żelazna Street, Złota Street and—because one side of Złota Street was already in the ghetto and then it continued along to where now we have Sienna Street—the wall is still there now. If you don't know I know a man who is taking care of the wall on Sienna Street 55, Złota 62. The wall is still there and there are the [commemorative] plaques. I stay in touch with that man. This—I gave a brick from the ghetto wall for the construction of the Remembrance and Forgiveness Memorial in Oświęcim [Kopiec Pamięci i Pojednania]. But right now I cannot remember his name. This man is taking care of it and he was a prisoner in the NKVD camps before he returned to Poland, to Warsaw. He was born around Lublin and immediately after the war he was interested in taking care of this wall at—in the house where he lives. And until now the tours from Israel and from other countries from around the world are coming here to see it.

Q: Let's perhaps focus on what you saw because this is a much later story. It is very interesting but it is not the topic of our discussion, so—

A: So they started the construction of the ghetto and we had to move out. We moved away and they simply closed the ghetto. And—but some various shops were still located on the territory of the ghetto because they were not relocated. The schools were there—and I was allowed to enter the ghetto with my school ID and I went there very often. I remember that I was going to Pańska Street by Mariańska Street. My Jewish friends were running a little Jewish theatre there. The specs were very nice and it was still relatively quiet and we didn't yet have—they weren't beating them hard yet. They weren't abusing the Jews yet. I was asked to bring the pork fat, which Jews didn't used to eat. But that was the time when they started to eat everything—both the meat and the pork fat. So I used to bring it for free from time to time. And the trading started—people started to trade with the Warsaw ghetto. They were smuggling the merchandise, the food. They, on the other hand, were exchanging other things—money or other articles. The Poles were trading with the ghetto and it was normal. On Żelazna by Ceglanej Street a lot of smuggling was going on. Some Germans were paid off and they were turning around and pretending that they didn't know what was going on, that the trading was going on. Germans took bribes. So they built the wall and many people were going to the ghetto. Then they started to liquidate the little ghetto; the Jews were moved to the big ghetto. There was a passage on Chłodna Street next to Żelazna Street. It was a so called bridge and trams were passing under it. This was the way I frequently took when I entered the

ghetto through the main gate. I wa—I was on Grzybowski Square, I was in many places in the ghetto, on Chłodna where I visited my Jewish friends. And from my house on Śliska came a friend who shared my name, another Henio [Henryk]. Before the war his parents had a chocolate factory on Grzybowska 11. And his mom had a fruit and soda stand. Back then they sold soda water from the big tapped bottles. She was selling fruit and ice cream and—and different types of juice, because she used to serve water with juice. So it was happening on Twarda Street next to Żelazna. It was, I think, a corner of—Żelazna 33, and on Twarda Street there was a building and then a wooden house, and there his mom ran the soda stand. And at the beginning his mom came with my friend Henio to visit us on Łódzka Street. To visit, to eat something because they were very hungry. They were dying from hunger already in the beginning. These people had no work and they were overcrowded. And my mom was cooking some sort of soup, I think, some barley soup and she was still adding a few things in—and this lady was quite well off. She was even—for God’s sake, she was better off than us; they had a chocolate factory, a store and so on. They were better off than us, but now they lived in an apartment underneath ours and they also had two rooms and a kitchen, just like us. And then—my mom threw away into the sink the carrots and the parsley and that lady grabbed it all and she said: “Mrs. Łagodzka, how can you throw that away?!” My mom was surprised because we weren’t going hungry yet. “How can I?—Just like always, it’s normal.”—“Yes, right, but now you mustn’t throw this away. This all can be eaten.” And she pulled it out from the sink. And [my mom] said: “But you are going to get the soup.”—“But I have to eat that too.” It was so, so hard to comprehend for us then, because it was the beginning [19]40 or ‘41, right after the closing of the ghetto. So such things were happening. Later when they returned they also got a package with food and they returned [unclear where]. Later we didn’t hear from them anymore.

Q: During our previous conversation you mentioned that you saw young boys who sm... [unfinished: smuggled]—who were smuggling food into the ghetto and then they were intercepted by Germans.

[01:] 22:03:23

21:41

A: Oh, that was happening very often. These little boys who were five, six, eight, ten or twelve, were the biggest, if I may say, bread winners. They were getting onto the Aryan side and they were arranging—they were bringing and getting various products. In exchange they were getting potatoes, beets, and other onions and when they were loaded like that they were getting through. And this is not all—where we had the ghetto we also had the water sewer canals, they were built the way so that water would go through. And they [the boys] were squeezing through these canals pass. Sometimes they were so loaded that they couldn’t get through. And very frequently the Germans were already waiting on

the other side for them. They would grab them and pull very hard through. They were smashing them. If a boy had the potatoes on him then they would literally break his ribs, because they would pull him by his hands and they would smash him. Later they would grab him by his feet and shake him out [*he imitates shaking*] and then they had—

Q: Have you seen such a scene, such a boy?—

A: I saw it many times. And then they would for—forward them to the Jewish police and they would torture them, because they wanted to demonstrate their power [*he glances with disgust*].

Q: Could you tell us about a situation when a Jewish policeman was maltreating a boy?

A: This—it was—it was quite commonplace. They—since they wanted to save their own lives they were torturing their fellow countrymen.

Q: Yes, but I'd like to know if you remember any such situations in particular. Perhaps you could describe the scene to us in more detail?

A: I would say this—on the street they caught a few young boys of about ten, twelve—it was—I was just going to school and I entered the ghetto with my school ID. My friend was still working in the shoe shop because there was a shoe factory on the area of the ghetto. So we were walking together and I saw when the Germans apprehended a few boys who had a lot of merchandise. They were simply shaking the food out of them and they were screaming and beating them. The boys were scared. Later they [the Germans] forwarded them to the Jewish police who had to earn their spurs. They [the Germans] simply wanted the police to beat the boys. They simply wanted that. So these men, like it or not, had to do it. Some were doing it reluctantly but—then the Germans took these policemen and they taught them a lesson so the next ones [other policemen] were beating the boys hard. It was very frequent—later they would let them go and the boys kept doing what they were doing before. They let them go—they left through the sewer to the Polish side and they continued [what they were doing]. Sometimes they succeeded and sometimes they had back luck. They did it very often.

[01:] 25:30:06

25:07

Q: And the scene you watched, when the Germans caught a few boys—did they catch them passing through the sewer opening?

- A: No, I saw them when they were already standing [in the street] when I was passing by. Because the tram was coming by and they were standing there. The Germans were talking to them and I saw what they were doing, that they were asking them questions and that they were talking to them. In that place they couldn't have squeezed through because it was the main gate and the bridge went overhead—over the street, over the tram track.
- Q: And you were on the tram—were you taking the tram?
- A: I frequently rode the tram through the ghetto.
- Q: But were you on the tram in that moment?
- A: No, no, I wasn't. I was walking by foot. I just entered on foot through that gate. They let us in when we showed our IDs. There were no problems. At the beginning it was all normal. Later we couldn't do it anymore though. They simply wouldn't let us in.
- Q: How close to that group were you passing?
- A: Well, about five steps away. I was very close to them. Very close. I was watching it but the Germans didn't want us to look and we could have been handled the same way [if we did], because they didn't respect us either. They would have done the same with us.
- Q: Could you please tell me how were you able to tell that someone was a Jewish policeman?
- A: Well, they had hats and belts and special type of uniforms. They, they—it wasn't like—he—the clothing was almost all civilian but they had Jewish hats with black and white checks, possibly also belts and clubs. That's how they were armed and they were well visible everywhere. There were many of them by the passes because there—on Chłodna Street, along Chłodna [many people] were trading. They were trading, trading everything. There were many things there to sell and among them [were mixed] also dead bodies of children and the elderly. It was all mixed up and nobody was paying any attention. In the shop window you could see pastries, which nobody, no poor Jews could afford. The conditions were horrible. I remember I went to Grzybowska Street, next to Żelazna Street. Opposite Grzybowska—next to Grzybowska 43 was—there was big trading. Big, big trading. They were selling everything. I didn't buy anything because I was simply too young. I was 13, 14—just like a boy I was curious and I was walking around here or there. We still visited with our friends and we were just watching it all curiously—how the people lived, how overcrowded it was, what had changed—we simply used to go for

a walk there to talk, to help sometimes. We helped as much as we could—the Poles were helping a lot. I have a friend named **Jański**. I have a friend here and I can tell you how he was describing it [likely the friend was an author of a book]. He died already. He helped the Jews and he collaborated with them, and he brought them the food. My friend did a lot, a lot of this—

Q: Could you please tell us—

A: For free.

Q: Did you ever witness the Germans shoot anybody in the ghetto?

A: No, I can't say that I did. I know that they were shooting but I didn't see such circumstances.

Q: I understand.

A: It would have been—

Q: In what year were you arrested?

A: I was arrested in 1943. The little ghetto didn't exist in '43 anymore. They started to liquidate the little ghetto. I remember that I was still living, as I said, on Łódzka Street, and the ghetto wall was right opposite Łódzka. It started on, probably, Pańska Street—because the territory of the ghetto was gradually diminished. Złota was already free and so was Sienna. There was still Pańska and Złota left. And they started to move the Jews out but some of them were still hiding. And the Germans were there and they were setting fire to the buildings at the bottom and I saw it with my own eyes when the Jews were jumping off from the top floor into the flames. But they couldn't save themselves that way. The Germans were standing right downstairs. They [the Jews] didn't want to burn so they were jumping down. I saw it in Żelazna Street, opposite from Łódzka Street. These sort of things were going on and I personally—

Q: And what was, more or less, the distance between you and the burning house?

A: Well, it was about ten meters because I was on the opposite side. The ghetto wall was in the middle of Żelazna Street and I was standing on the corner of Łódzka and Żelazna. It was about—

Q: Were there many cases like that?

A: Many, many, many cases like that.

Q: Could you estimate? Was it a few or a few dozen times?

A: I saw about five cases like these. I saw about five cases when the Jews were jumping off the roofs and balconies, so—

Q: Was it?—

A: The women—mostly men were brave but women were jumping as well.

Q: Was it during the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto?

A: No, not during the uprising—about the ghetto uprising—the ghetto uprising looked a little different because it was already—the ghetto was already liquidated, I have to say honestly, and some of the houses here were spared, here on Żelazna. And others moved in, the Poles. Some [houses] were renovated whereas the ghetto was where [present day] Anielewicz Street is—a little further over there. And supposedly there—because German cars [or carts] were passing here and I didn't have any access any more. Only my friends, my friend managed to get through the canals and they were supplying Jewish organizations with the weapons. This is how I know what was happening, that the Germans were surrounding and pacifying the buildings. They were setting fire to the buildings and they [the Jews] were hidden in their shelters, and in the basements. They were shooting because they wanted to get out. It was a little different. It looked a little like our Warsaw Uprising but it was more of a defense fight then—we were attacking and here the Germans—that is the Germans were attacking them more so and they were defending their families, their homes their bunkers and—

Q: And did you hear the shooting in the ghetto when you were watching these people jump off the windows and the balconies?

A: Of course, the Germans were shooting at people who tried to jump. Some of them were shot and they were falling down already dead. And you could see them on fire—because the fire was moving from the bottom to the top and sometimes they got engulfed by flames. And they were sometimes on fire when they were jumping off. And the Germans were watching that. Because the guards along the wall of the ghetto were in the military, in the German army. Ukrainians were in the German army and these—the men of different nationalities who worked—who collaborated with the Germans and they—the Latvians, there were many Latvians. They were armed and it was very unpleasant. The

Silesians were there, the Silesians and they were!—*[he shakes his head]*: “I am from Silesia!” *[he tries to imitate Silesian accent]*. They acted very badly towards the Jews and also towards us in the camp. They acted very badly. They said: “I am Polish”—they were Polish but they but they maltreated us and the Jews. That’s how “Polish” they were. So they weren’t helping. Sometimes there were also noble Germans who—

Q: And back then—did you know back then that your friend was smuggling weapons through the sewers during the uprising?

A: I knew that, he was—my friend was arrested before. He was arrested with weapons and we met on Szucha Avenue. Before on—on the tram [likely he was arrested on the tram]. Later we were together in Pawiak [prison]—he with different charges and I with different. I was arrested without anything, without any proof, and he had the incriminating evidence. He was then sent to a concentration camp in Germany whereas I, after the Szucha Avenue and after Pawiak, ended up in KL Warschau [GERMAN: Konzentrationslager Warschau, Warsaw concentration camp] on Gęsia Street, present-day Anielewicza Street. There they created the main concentration camp for the Polish Jews, Gypsies and us. Before, it used to be a military prison. And later, after the ghetto had been burned down we were building barracks along Gęsia Street for the Greek Jews. Because many Greek Jews soon arrived.

[01:] 35:22:18

35:00

A: Yes, I wanted to ask you about your experiences from the camp on Gęsia Street in a minute, but first I wanted to make sure that I understood correctly. So you learned later on, when you saw him on Szucha Avenue that your friend was smuggling weapons to the ghetto, right? Or did you know earlier?

Q: I knew it, I knew it—only I was younger than him. He was three years older than me and he was more experienced. He worked in the organization [underground]. In the time when I was 16 and he was 19 the age difference between us was great. A big difference—he worked as an adult and I was still a whippersnapper. And I didn’t really participate in all that, I can’t take credit. But I knew about it and perhaps I would have started to do it as well if I hadn’t been arrested. But it so happened that I was arrested together with my friend Rysio [Ryszard] **Kowalski**. I was arrested by accident on Żelazna Street, the corner of Chłodna Street and it created—my friend was arrested before and he was in prison for—on Piłsudski Square where a house **Dom Bez Kantów** is. And later he was transferred to Szucha Avenue at the same time, in [19]43. *[The narration is a little unclear. Likely the interviewee’s friend, Rysio Kowalski who was 19 was arrested while*

carrying weapons. He spent some time in prison and then was transferred to Szucha Avenue where the interviewee saw him in 1943].

A: Do you remember what month you were arrested?

Q: In July, at the beginning of July [19]43. In the first days of July.

Q: And that was already after the ghetto uprising?

A: Yes, I think so, I think so. It was already—it was after the uprising. It was after the ghetto uprising, because the ghetto was already entirely burned. So when I was already in the camp—because I was in the camp only in—I was there in July, August, September and October and the ghetto was entirely burned. People were at that time pulling out various mattresses or other things from the house and the Germans from the camp were chasing them. And the Germans were setting fire—and part of them [Jews] was still hiding in the bunkers so they were still catching some people. That's when it was all happening.

Q: Please tell us about the camp on Gęsia Street. What were the living conditions?

A: The conditions were truly horrible. The camp was made out of the former military prison. There was a huge yard there, and this yard still is there, I must say. It was built, as if, to last. I am not sure if that was deliberate—I don't know why. We were there recently with the TV crew and they made two movies with me about KL Warschau and I was showing the terrain and explaining what was where. And when you look at the houses by Anielewicz Street you can see the houses where the families of former UB, Urząd Bezpieczeństwa, Security Service employees live—and also the families of those who murdered the Poles and the Jews. Why? I just video recorded it recently, probably—

Q: I am sorry Mr. Henryk, but let's save this part of the story for later and let's return to the camp on Gęsia Street.

A: *[He laughs]*

Q: Alright?

A: Yes.

Q: You said that the conditions were horrible.

A: The conditions were horrible. We were staying in prison cells, which were locked for the night. They were opened for the day, they were open the same way the camp was open. We had a huge assembly square, and we—a cell that was designed for probably 20 prisoners held 40 or 50. We were so crowded that we were literally lying side by side. And when the Greek Jews were brought in later on we were moved to the first floor. The Jews were crowded in here in an unbelievable number; they couldn't even lie on their sides. We could lie on our sides but whoever wanted to get up to the bathroom in the middle of the night had to stand until the night was over, or he had to lie down somewhere on the concrete in the hallway, because it was impossible. We were crowded and the Jews even more so. The Jews were starved and maltreated to the highest degree. From the first day when the Greek Jews arrived they were murdered in a horrible way. They started [to do it] like in Oświęcim—carts were coming and they were taking them [the Jews] towards the cemetery, the Jewish cemetery over there. Supposedly there was a portable crematorium there. I am not sure whether that was really true because I never went there during that time; I only heard that from others, who were taking their friends' dead bodies there.

Q: Could you try to estimate how many dead bodies there were?

A: Every—every day a few dozen cartloads. They were leaving loaded up from where my prison was and these hands [*he simulates dangling hands*], the legs were dangling and the cart was pushed by two, three or five. It depended on how many dead bodies were on the cart. And they were taking it, driving it towards the Jewish cemetery. So—

Q: So do you believe that about dozen prisoners died?

A: Daily a dozen for sure.

Q: Maybe a few dozen?

A: From my area about a dozen. Simply from hunger and exhaustion. And those were the ones who died close to me. They were from the so called Greek intelligentsia, Jewish-Greek intelligentsia. They were the people of art and some entrepreneurs, who were traveling with passports. Because it was like that: they were telling us that they already had passports and they were supposed to travel abroad. And like I told you before the first transport came in here. Germans came in and they lined us up for the Jews to see—for us to see [unclear] A Jewish delegation walked in to see and they were told that this is a camp for those who fight against the occupants, against them [the Germans]. They were showing them how it looked. They were just supposed to show them. They brought them in on the camp's territory and they were dressed in beautiful fur coats, it was already

October, November, and they had beautiful leather suitcases covered with stickers from the best hotels. They had passports and they came in here and they were looking around. They looked at us with pity and we felt hurt. The following day they became prisoners themselves. They told them that they need to change and wash because of the insects they might catch. Then they took everything they had and they didn't feed them since then on. They were literally dying on the first day. On the first day. I personally saw when a German caught a Greek Jew the following day—[he was] of Jewish origin. He [the Jew] was walking by and there was a kitchen. And there he [the German] was pounding a potato with his fist into his mouth [*he imitates*]. Because the other one was biting on the potato, a raw potato, because he was hungry, and he [the German] was pounding it in. I saw it myself.

Q: And where were you?

A: I was on the area, on the area of the square. I was in the square because it was already after work. It was towards the evening after the so called supper. We still had—we were still allowed to go outside.

Q: Was it far from the place where you?—

A: It was about a few meters. A German spotted that Jew, because we were set apart. We—

Q: Let's just please finish this story. What happened later to the Jew who?—

A: He was pounding it [the potato] in and later I don't know. He was still beating him and what happened later—we were not allowed to look. When they saw us they were chasing us away, they were screaming. And kapo—because the Germans had German criminals, right. There were the barracks—they had two barracks for the Jew—German criminals. Because they were wearing striped uniforms, they got the same striped uniforms as the other ones [possibly Jews]. On the other hand, we had prison uniforms from the old—old prison. Pre-war—they apparently remained and they put them on us. They had numbers and a triangle. And they already had—the Jews had the striped uniforms, and the Germans had stripes as well.

Q: Please tell us how many Jews arrived on the transport from Greece?

[01:] 44:48:08

44:23

A: Very many. It was loaded—I know that they loaded the entire first floor to the top. Part of us was moved from the first floor to the second floor. There was about few hundreds of them.

Q: Did they cross the camp gate by foot or were they transported somehow?

A: By foot, by foot. They were brought in by foot, with all these suitcases with everything, to see all this. They were near the administrative buildings by the gate. It was a huge group of Jews. Perhaps not every one of them got in at that time, but in any case—

Q: So you are talking about the Greek Jews—what other nationalities were there at camp?

A: There were the Poles, Polish and Greek Jews—later they moved the Jews out and we stayed together with the Gypsies. And later they brought in the Greek Jews. It happened close to me and I saw that personally.

Q: You said that the Polish Jews were moved out—how was that carried out?

A: Well, they were simply taken and loaded onto the cars and then they were moved out. I am not sure if they were taken to the train tracks—probably to the Dworzec Zachodni station. And from there they were taken in cattle cars to Majdanek or Auschwitz. Back then we really didn't have an idea—it was—just a moment, I was 16, I was a whippersnapper—an adult and a kid at the same time and I didn't realize many things. It was simply so sudden, so strange and so unexplainable. How did it happen? I didn't know why us, why—what was happening to us. I was sometimes beaten and maltreated more than the adults. Older people died faster. We, the youth, we adapted. Our young age—we adapted faster than these people who were 30 or 40. Not even mentioning these who were 50 or 60. They were dying fast and many Poles were dying in the camp as well.

Q: This is what I wanted to ask about. Did you ever witness the killing or public punishment of the prisoners?

A: I witnessed the punishment but not the killing. We were returning to the premises of the camp and we were searched thoroughly. They took everything from us and later they forced us to run around the square and they sent the dogs on us. And my cousin from my mother's side was caught by a dog by his penis. He would have bitten it off if the German didn't stop the dog in the last moment. He—my cousin simply would have been an invalid.

Q: Did you witness that?

A: Of course I witnessed that.

Q: So you were also in that group of prisoners _____?

A: yes, because I was forced to run, we were forced to run until we had no strength left because they found food on us, in any case. They were taking it all. Later it [the food] was taken to the kitchen. Whatever was good they were taking for themselves and the rest was going to the kitchen. That was normal. Otherwise we were not beaten. We were also beaten with the whips or rifles at work for moving too slowly. We were ordered to carry cement sacks which were about 50 kilos [115 lbs]. I could barely lift it but I had to. They were beating me. It was truly horrible.

Q: Did you perhaps see the moment of a public execution of the prisoners?

A: No, [it didn't happen] close to me. Not close to me. When I was in Pawiak, I knew that they were shooting the prisoners in the burned rubble of the buildings. Both Polish and Jewish prisoners.

Q: How did you know that?

A: We could hear the shots. We were taken and later it was spread around—by whispering from one to another and then passing it on through the guards. At the beginning a part of the guards was still Polish. They were passing—they were forwarding secret messages. They notified my parents. Because later even the guards from Pawiak were dying. Many of them died after the Germans had proved that they had been helping the prisoners.

Q: During our previous conversation you talked about the rebellion of the prisoners against the **Kapo**.

[01:] 50:04:22

49:41

A: Yes. That did happen because these kapo acted simply horrible towards us. They were hitting us at any possible occasion, searching us and just taking advantage of us for just about anything. And a group of our friends—I am not sure, perhaps it was some time—the huge group attacked. They were breaking tables and benches and they stormed the barracks where the German kapo were. We gave them a good lashing whereas they came to the prison and gave us a horrible beating in return. If the SS hadn't intervened they would have killed us. We were locking ourselves up in our cells but it was impossible. They had all the rights and the Germans gave them a “go” to some extent. Many of us

were wounded. I wasn't wounded. Somehow—perhaps I was lucky or I wasn't as actively participating as the ones who were older than me. In any case, it was a huge battle—an unmatched rebellion of Poles against the conditions and the behavior of the German kapo.

Q: Were you later punished for it as well?

A: Well...

Q: Apart from the beating?

A: Yes, we were deported to other concentration camps. Many of us. And here because of that, this happened—because we—we were so overcrowded that they were moving us out. Every so often a transport was going. And this was going on because they [the Germans] were liquidating the camp for the Poles and they were only leaving the Jews behind. And later I was also deported on one of the transports—I was taken out because we were supposed to be deported. I was taken to the Arbeitsamt on Kredytowa Street because over there we were separated to be sent to different camps—whether it were Majdanek or Oświęcim, or Matthausen, or other camps.

Q: Uhm. And you ended up in a camp?

A: Exactly, when I already new, towards the end of our stay there I already knew that we were supposed to be transferred to another camp and I sent a secret message to my mom. It said: „Mommy...” so that she could bring me something warm because I was caught in just a shirt in summer. It was summer at the beginning of July and now we had November—to bring me a coat and a hat—my head was shaved. And when we more or less knew when they—mothers and wives and sisters were waiting on Leszno Street, opposite from Karmelicka Street, next to the Church that is **przesuwany** [“przesuwany” means: movable, mobile; overall meaning of “mobile church” is obscure]. There used to be an exit to Leszno Street there but now this passage is closed. And they were waiting there and we were supposed to be taken by cars but there was no transport available so we went by foot. Our group was about 30 or 40 _____ but there were not too many guards with us. So we were walking on the street and the mothers were following us on the edge of the sidewalk. My mom wanted to hand me the coat and the hat but I stopped her. I was waiting for the moment to escape and I was moving towards the end until I was walking in the last row of three. And I tried having the German overtake me. I got to the Bankowy Square next to Elektoralna Street. And it so happened that a German or someone—there was a little confusion. A German took half a step forward, my mom handed me the coat and the hat and I stepped over—took two steps onto the sidewalk, I

took my mom's arm and I turned into Elektoralna Street. The German realized what happened, he started to shoot in the air but couldn't chase me or anything because—nowadays Bankowy Square has little traffic. There used to be a lot of traffic. It was literally like an open air market so the German couldn't afford to shoot in the crowd. So then I ran away and I heard another one ran away as well. This way I managed to avoid another concentration camp.

[01:] 54:59:08

54:36

Q: What year and month was it?

A: [19]43. [19]43, November. Whereas I—I managed to get home the same day. I ate supper at home together with my father; I saw my father and my father moved me to Warsaw to a distant street to my aunt from my mother's side. There I stayed hidden together with my cousin from my mother's side, who also tried to hide from the Germans. My aunt had one room over the front door of the building and there she kept us hidden till May of 1944 risking her own life. She was very brave, in any case. Because everybody was curious, there were many Volksdeutschen and others and if they had learned—

Q: Right.

A: —she would have died.

Q: In August of [19]44 the Warsaw Uprising started and after that uprising you ended up in a POW camp, as far as I remember from our previous conversation, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Could you tell us about that period of your life? About your march to the camp and about the camp?

A: It so happened that towards the end of the uprising I was fighting on Pańska Street 105, corner of Wronia. It was a post and along Wronia went our defense line. When we surrendered I left that post. It was the 5th—surrender happened on—it was supposed to be the 3rd—but we stayed on post until the 5th of October. There were still fights in the meantime although supposedly we surrendered. We didn't even fully know about it. We didn't realize it. We couldn't even believe that we had to give in, that we had to go into captivity—it was—we couldn't even wrap our heads around it. We were sure of the victory. We were young—I was 17 already. Age considering, I was already an adult. From there we went into captivity. The column was gathering on Żelazna Street next to

Pańska Street. On Żelazna 36 in the back yard there was an altar set up and there was—we had a holy mass. The civilians and the military and all the people gathered there. Starting on Grzybowka Street the Germans were already waiting for us. They stood along Żelazna and Chłodna and they were waiting for our column to start marching. We were fully armed. After the holy mass we were marching fully armed and we were singing, while the civilians were bidding farewell to us. Jews were marching to captivity together with us. They got the identification documents that they were the Home Army soldiers although they didn't fight with us. The leaders of the Home Army wanted to save them because they knew that if the [the Jews] had been left behind they would have been killed—so they marched. Young boys, our piers were going to captivity. And all that time—they went through three camps with me—we had a few Jews. I even have a picture—we parted in [19]45 when Germans—in Germany. He was supposed to go to Israel and we went to Warsaw and I don't know how he got there later.

Q: Do you remember his name?

A: No I don't remember his last name anymore.

Q: What camps did you end up in?

A: At the very beginning I got to Lamsdorf, presently it is called Łambinowice, later to Mühlberg—it was a well known international POW camp, and to **Brockwitzvau**—it was a POW camp and a factory of the Messerschmitt airplanes. We were building airplane hulls there. Previously it was a glass factory.

Q: Could we please take a short break now?

A: Very well.

Q: Just a second.

[01:]59:30:09

59:06

File 2 of 2

[02:] 00:20:24

00:22

Q: I wanted once again to come back to the story about the friend who took—smuggled weapons to the ghetto during the ghetto uprising. Do you remember his name??

A: I have here a book [*he looks around*]. You know in this moment... [*He bends over towards the interviewer*]

Q: You lost it?

A: [*He laughs*] I lost his last and even his first name now.

Q: That happens perhaps you will remember it later.

A: Yes.

Q: We will come back to that then. And now a question about the later period. When you were in the POW camps after the Warsaw Uprising, did you ever witness executions, the killing of prisoners – crimes against mankind, generally speaking?

A: It is hard to say, we were—Germans persecuted us in various ways, but they weren't killing us openly. How did they torture us? We were eaten by vermin – that's how they were torturing us. They were shooting when someone approached the wires and many POWs died this way.

Q: Did you ever witness when someone was shot by the wires?

A: I personally didn't but my friends who tried to run away—I even have a friend who escaped the POW camp three times. And they were shooting at them. That means my friends did, they died.

Q: What were their names? Do you remember perhaps?

A: I don't remember their names at all. I will tell you honestly that when we worked for the underground, when we were in the Warsaw Uprising we didn't know anybody's names. We only knew the pseudonyms. I was—I generally had a nickname Hrabia [a Count] and later Orzeł [an Eagle]. They called me Hrabia or Orzeł and they call me Hrabia, Orzeł now. Some don't even know my name. I didn't know either. We simply knew our pseudonyms and sometimes our first names but last names weren't mentioned. It was simply a secret.

Q: I understand.

- A: And you said that they exhausted you with the assemblies. Do you remember any assembly in particular?
- A: Of course I do—the one from the POW camp in Lamsdorf, presently Łambinowice. Germans wanted to make a movie for Hitlerjugend there. They set up the cameras on the roofs of the barracks and we were mustered on the assembly square. Then they were calling out: “boys up till 18—step out!”, “up till 16”, “15, 14, 13, 12, 10—step out!” And bigger and bigger crowds were stepping out and they stopped to tape. They saw that there were so many youth who were 12, 13, 14 year old and also very many of those who were 15 got to a POW camp. And that they fought—they wanted initially—but it was a big crowd of people [unclear general meaning]. He is even writing about it—many of my friends wrote about it, and I wrote about it. I wrote about it as well and I have it in my memoirs. I am describing the assembly square, how we were standing there for many hours, in the rain and in the mud and Germans were calling us out and they were counting us, and then they were questioning us: what, where and on what conditions. Because they wanted to get some on their side. To say—to encourage their youth, the Hitlerjugend to defend [their country]. Because towards the end young boys from Hitlerjugend were in the German army—they and the old people, veterans, who shouldn't have been in the army because they even acted horribly. They couldn't even lift the rifle and when a German was escorting us we could have hurt him just by ourselves. He was in no shape to defend himself—to defend even though he had a rifle. He was escorting two, three or five of us. And let's be honest, he was walking with a rifle just to be official. But they really weren't soldiers anymore. And they wanted to train both the young and the old.
- Q: And were there perhaps any instances in the camp when the prisoners were punished publicly?
- A: They were punished very frequently.
- Q: What sort of punishments were these?
- A: Beating, especially beating and standing. Standing [POLISH: stójka], very frequently the standing. You had to stand in the frost and in the cold. The prisoner was guarded and he simply had to stand for breaking of some sort of the law, trespassing in their eyes, not _____ ours. And they sometimes stood half a day, the entire night in the cold and without food.
- Q: Did you see a situation like that?

A: Of course.

Q: When someone was made?—

A: Of course, I saw two friends in Łambinowice. They were standing on the assembly square. The more we—it wasn't enough that the conditions were terrible. For a few hundred—a few hundred had to share one well at camp. You can imagine that we had no water. We had no water. When we got soup and we wanted to add or drink water there was none. You couldn't even wash. We washed up with coffee. When we got a drop of coffee in a glass—in a mess kit—[what am I saying] we didn't have mess-kits. We had some sort—some sort of cans from canned food. We didn't even have a real bowl. Let's speak honestly, whoever had a bowl he could eat, whoever didn't have a spoon he couldn't get nourishment. The conditions were truly horrible. My first POW camp in Łambinowice was really hard. You could even see that because I—there is a camp museum in Łambinowice. I go there every year and my friends are going too, we are invited – and they have all the memorabilia there and they are reconstructing it all. All the memoirs, my recordings are there, the recordings of my friends—it was the hardest POW camp.

[02:] 07:07:07

07:07

Q: And what happened to these two friends who had to stand?

A: Well, later they were released and nothing happened to them. They simply survived, they were young. Young boys have that quality that they simply, you know, don't break down. Older people break down, but not the young. The young can adapt. This young organism can adapt. I adapted and many of my friends adapted—sometime after the war you start to feel what you went through—you start to feel it. Many of my friends—my younger friend had just passed away. He was with me at the POW camp and he was ten at the time. Now he has been seriously ill and he died about three months ago. He was in a terrible shape.

Q: Did it perhaps happen that the prisoners in your block died of emaciation? Did you see the bodies like you saw them before?

A: I will honestly say that they were only moved—I saw when they brought the bodies from Warsaw to Łambinowice. They were pulling out the killed and the wounded that had died in the rail car from hunger and from strain, and from being overcrowded. On the other hand they sometimes delivered—o! I will tell you how we were travelling from Warsaw to Łambinowice. They didn't open our car for three days and then the roof got

ripped off from that car. It was, it was October and it started to sleet. We were pounding and they finally stopped the train, they open the car and they added us to other cars. Initially there were 70, 80 in there but they still added on. Other fellows were dying already from strain and from hunger and when they started to make commotion the Germans opened fire on the car and shot one of my friends and wounded another. He was a famous lawyer named **Antoniewski**. He was a famous lawyer and he lost his hand. In camp they took away his right hand..

Q: Were you in that car when that was going on?

A: Yes, it happened in my car.

Q: I understand.

A: And **Antoniewski**, his name...—how thoughts run away when you want to say it.

Q: And after that incident when the Germans were shooting—did anybody else from that transport die in your car?

A: No. No, only that one was shot and my friend **Antoniewski** was wounded. They pulled him out. It is even hard for me to say what was going on in other cars because they hurried us in a column to the POW camp and we didn't know what was going on with the people on the train anymore. There were no messages and no information. You couldn't ask anybody because nobody knew. _____. This column went as last. You didn't even know what happened to the other one. On the way the citizens of Łam—back then of Lamsdorf were spitting at us and they were hitting us. The youth and the Hitlerjugend were throwing stones at us on the way, so—

s

Q: Do you remember the bodies of those who were pulled out from the cars on the way to Łambinowice—the ones you saw?

A: A few, a few. Whether they all died from exhaustion it is hard for me to say. I definitely saw dead bodies. Strain crossed our endurance. They were simply so crowded. We didn't have a place to go to the bathroom. How? Can you imagine what was going on in these cars! .

Q: Thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

[Another man]

Q: Could you put it away?

[Interviewer]

Q: Perhaps the glasses...

A: [Interviewee puts away the glasses]

[02:] 11:09:19

11:11

Q: [In English] we are ready. [In Polish] from our previous conversation we know that you stayed in POW camps till May, till the beginning of [19]45. I wanted to know when you returned to Warsaw.

A: I returned to Warsaw more or less towards the end of May [19]45. I was in a hurry. When I was freed somewhere near the Czech border, close to the Czech border, my friends and I immediately wanted to return to Warsaw. We decided that we wouldn't go to the Americans—because at camp we already received English dictionaries to learn English and there—these terrains—the Americans were supposed to take us. Americans were – they occupied—about half a kilometer away from us. The Russians were here. And we simply didn't try to—we returned to the village and we said: “We have to”— we met a Polish woman, she said she was Polish and she cooked dinner for us. We started to—aha, and we first returned to the village and the Russian tanks were entering. And we had Polish uniforms on, that means the uniforms we got in captivity were American or British. And the first thing a Russian did to us, to me—he took the hat off my head. Later two Russians jumped off, former POWs, and they took off my coat. Later they wanted to take off my boots. They didn't succeed but in any case we started to feel a little—the friends—we all started to run away. We began to fear [he is coughing] because the Russians said that they would shoot us. That we were: “American, American.”—they were saying—that we were American because we had American uniforms on.

Q: But despite all these adventures you managed to get to Warsaw, right? What impression did it make on you?

A: I will tell you right away. Before that all we had to quickly change in our civilian clothes. We got the bikes and we hurried towards Warsaw. On the way Russians took our bikes away once again. As soon as we managed to get some food the Soviet army would take it away because they were hungry. They were drunk and hungry. So we somehow got to Warsaw in these hard conditions. We were exhausted. They took everything away from us. I only had two handkerchiefs left from there, which I brought with me. Nothing else.

Modest clothing and I had nothing with me. Others perhaps brought something back from Germany but I didn't. And we were in a hurry. And what did I see? My house _____ was standing but all the belongings were burned. Basements were burned.

Q: Are you talking about the house on Śliska Street?—

A: On Łódzka.

Q: —or on Łódzka?

A: On Łódzka 14. That means the basements were plundered by looters that means, it is hard to say—by Germans, by looters. They had been set on fire before I came back not to leave any traces. Why do I think they were plundered—because there were metal trays and silverware and other things, right? They wouldn't have burned. They weren't left in the ashes in the basement.—in our basement or other people's basements. That means it had to be stolen and later set on fire to cover the traces. But the apartment survived.

Q: And was the apartment suited to live in?

A: Of course. The furniture was there. Only the clothing was gone, nothing was left because we took everything to the basement so that it wouldn't get burned during the Warsaw Uprising. So my house remained and it stands until this day. It is historical—it is probably a historical building which most likely will remain—in any case—

Q: Were there many houses in Warsaw which were suitable to live?

A: That means part of them—perhaps there were not so many. Majority of good houses remained in a German district. Litewska Street, Szucha Avenue, in all these areas where Germans were staying. Whereas here on Chłodna Street where my wife lived the back building was burned but the front one remained. My wife's apartment was burned but the front apartments stayed. And we—many houses remained just like my apartment on Łódzka. Some houses closer to Towarowa and Wronia Street were burned. My apartment building was one of the largest, [number] 14. It was a five storey building and it survived almost—the back building in the courtyard was burned to the ground.

[02:] 16:15:13

16:17

Q: You returned towards the end of May. Were there many people back in Warsaw after just a few months since the Germans retreated?

A: Already—when I [was there] there were quite a few people—I came to my former—I wanted to see what my former house on Śliska 58 looked like. And I came and my building was burned, and my previous apartment was burned. And I felt a lot of sentiment for that apartment—many memories from my young days. So I went to Śliska 58 and the other building there remained and suddenly somebody was calling out. It turned out that the woman who was calling me was on the first floor and it was the Jewish woman who was running the fruit and soda stand next door on Śliska 56. We sometimes used to lift a few oranges from her, although she knew that we were doing that. We made quite a commotion and her son was helping us out with that. Her son was our friend; owner's son was helping us with that.

Q: Yes, you indeed talked about her...

A: Exactly.

Q: So she survived the war, right?

A: She survived the war and she got some war compensation and she said that she was going abroad—something like that.

Q: And what happened to her son, your friend?

A: He died just like her husband died. She was the only one who survived. There was such a coincidence—I was shocked that she recognized me because I—

[02:] 17:51:00

17:52

Q: Do you remember her name?

A: I have no idea. No idea. I only remember the last name of that **Freuim [Froim]**, who later in the Warsaw Uprising—oh, exactly, I want to say—I don't know if I said that before—the Warsaw Uprising—tanks attacked our apartment building on Pańska Street 108, where I was. And my neighbor who ran a store on Śliska **68** [or: 78] joined the uprising. He was a man—as if a sort of supply officer, if I can say so. When we were under fire he was on the first floor and he didn't run away. The ceiling collapsed. The entire ceiling, the front [unclear: perhaps he meant part of the wall] and the ceiling [*he points to the ceiling*] fell down and covered his legs. And we heard him cry: “**Giwaut, giwalt**” [possibly Yiddish] so we ran there—

Q: Was it Mr. **Froim**? Are you talking about him?

A: **Froim, Froim.** Exactly. We saved him, we pulled him out somehow and we saved his legs. He was taken to the hospital and he was all right. I don't know what happened to him later—he was taken to the hospital and then it is hard to say what happened next. That day I was wounded [*he points to his leg*] in the leg. I was running—I still have that bullet. It ricocheted and the bullet stayed in me. I was running in the stairwell and there went a ricochet, it bounced and I got wounded. But I survived.

Q: But I am wondering how—I understand that Mr. **Froim**, who was Jewish—he somehow managed to hide up till the Warsaw Uprising.

A: He had to hide. He was hiding somewhere. I never asked him because there was no opportunity. Everybody simply had somebody they knew. Many Jews stayed in hiding and many remained in Warsaw until the liberation. Many stayed hidden in places you would least expect. There were walled off basements. In the burned rubble it was so arranged that some passages were walled off and they got there and that's how it was—

Q: Let's return to liberated Warsaw in [19]45. You say that there were many people. Could you try to describe how the street life looked? What were the conditions?

A: The conditions were very strange. I remember Kazimierza Wielkiego Square, where Dom Słowa Polskiego [press building of the "Słowo Polskie" newspaper] used to be recently and where we now have a department store. Here was a huge bazaar. People were bringing out everything they had and it even turned out—because it so happened that my mom recognized her own things, which were sold by others. People were stealing and plundering and my mom bought her things back. That lady said it was hers but my mom said—doesn't matter, you can't prove it. She was only happy—and she bought it. So everything—it was a bazaar and people were trading. There were little booths and shacks in the streets and so on. Along Marszał—Marszałkowska Street was a one storey merchants' street. It was all so strange—cafes were scattered in between. And I even went to Fog's café [Mieczysław Fog: a singer famous during war period] on the corner of Wspólna and probably Marszałkowska, corner of Wspólna. It was wonderful—I remember Fog sing—

Q: What was the café like?

A: Well, there were cafes—I remember the corner was made of—they made little narrow windows [*he simulates rows of windows.*] On the inside it was quite ordinary, there was a

grand piano. They played and sang. There were tables and coffee. It wasn't too good but it was there. I was there only once, I think. I was still a young man. I was 18 or 19 and I was checking it out. Warsaw was very slowly rebuilding. It was rebuilding and I started to work in the construction industry on Aleje Ujazdowskie 31[or: 37, 39]. It was a Spółeczne Przedsiębiorstwo Budowlane [People's Construction Enterprise] and I worked in the area of the **Dom Bez Kantów** house, the one that still presently exists. The military stayed there and later the socialist prominent, even Jaroszewicz [former socialist president Jarosław Jaroszewicz] lived there. What I remember is that together with the electricians I was working on putting down the electrical line.

Q: Could you also tell us—we are more interested in the first—in the time you arrived to Warsaw. Did you have any problems with getting food and food supplies?

A: It was always difficult with the food supplies, it was very difficult. People were travelling to the villages, to their family to get something. My Mother was also going to the family in **Góreckie** region and it was very difficult. You had to travel in many various ways. On horse-drawn carts and even—can you imagine that to get to Praga [a district of Warsaw] you had to mount a truck! There was a special big truck, loaded to the top. You got standing room for a small fee and you crossed that way through a makeshift bridge on the river [The Wisła River]. It was—

Q: There were no other bridges, right?

A: No, there were none. It was all destroyed and leveled. There was plenty of rubble. It was something truly awful. That is not all—I want to tell you that a super from our house, Mr. **Kozłowski** – I still remember his name – he was making money on these people, on all of that. Apparently he was stealing. During the occupation he would go to Warsaw. After the war I hear that they were digging in the Old Town [Stare Miasto]. They were excavating the basements and finding people who suffocated in the basements. They were taking their jewelry and so on. I heard that that **Kozłowski** was doing it as well. Later he made some money and that man could neither read nor write.

Q: Could you also tell us just in a few sentences what was the atmosphere in Warsaw like? It was ruined but it was coming back to life—

A: The atmosphere was strange. It was said that the war would break out, that there would be war again. That it made no sense to do anything because there would be war again, all the time war. No use to prepare or do anything. Even when I met my wife in [19]48 when we got married, the apartments—was it worth to join any Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa [it was an office responsible for distributing apartments to all who needed them during the

socialist era], or wasn't it? "There will be war", all the time: "war." It was said that we will be at war with America because we belonged to the Russian group [Eastern Block]. "We will be fighting against the Americans."—that's how it was. We had it on our minds all the time and we had big difficulties with getting food supplies or clothing. We had nothing to wear. There was really nothing to eat. I very frequently ate bread with margarine. In [19]48 I was working at the airport in Bemowo and I took with me just bread with a very thin layer of margarine. Well—

Q: Thank you very much.

A: That was my daily nourishment. Thank you very much. These were very tough conditions.

[02:] 25:33:04

25:35

Conclusion of the interview.

No restrictions.

Translated by Agnieszka McClure on 07/20/2011