

Translation/Summary of Oral history interview with Kazimierz Jaworski

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Kazimierz Jaworski (KJ) a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, was born on March 2, 1921 in Lwów (now L'viv, Ukraine), near Zielona Street, 99. Father's name was Piotr. Mother's name was Anna. His brother's name was Tomasz, who was 7 years older than Kazimierz. The reason for this difference in their age was that right after marrying in 1914, his father went to serve in the Austrian army. He was assigned to a fortress in Przemyśl. This fortress was captured by the Russians and all the captured Austrian prisoners were sent to Siberia, where they spent 5 years. Kazimierz was born after his father returned from prison.

The apartment building in which KJ lived had 11 families—all workers for the city's water supply system. The apartment building was on one side of the street and on the other was the water system's machine shop. KJ's mother was a housewife. At age 7, KJ went to elementary school at Saint Zofia. He attended school there for 4 years. Boys and girls attended the school separately. An interesting fact about this school was that it offered Russian as a foreign language. For a number of years before the war, the Ukrainians living in Lwów were recognized as Ruthenians. It was only after some Ukrainians who were educated in Germany started to return to Lwów that they began to identify themselves as Ukrainians.

During the years that immediately preceded the war, all the different nationalities living in Lwów, lived very harmoniously and cooperatively. There were Armenians, Jews, Germans and Ukrainians. The majority were Poles. There were also quite a few mixed families. The cooperation among all these people was quite remarkable.

Interviewer (I.): Who lived on Zielona Street?

KJ: Poles, Ukrainians Jews. This was the case on most streets. Across the street from JK lived 3 Jewish families. Their last name was Wolf. All the children played together. Because behind KJ's house were playing fields, and all the local kids gathered there regularly to play ball. By the time that KJ was going to secondary school, he had in his class 3 Ukrainians and 3 Jews. No one discriminated against them.

KJ proceeds to describe the standard of living of a range of the residents in Lwów. For example, an unemployed head of a family received 60 zł./month as his unemployment benefit. A teacher in a farming village earned 100 zł./ month, but he almost didn't need to spend a penny of this salary. Once a year he was expected to buy notebooks and textbooks for the poorest students in his class. Otherwise, all the produce that was grown by the villagers was brought to him free of charge. Each week he would get an allotment of milk, cheese, sour cream and eggs. And if a farmer slaughtered an animal, he would bring some meat for the teacher. If the kids caught fish, they would share them with the teacher. KJ remembers this from the time that he lived at his relative's house in the country when he was recovering from whooping cough. Many people who earned low salaries received fringe benefits and subsidies from their employers. This allowed many to build their own houses. In his father's case, the apartment in which they lived was rent-free, since the building belonged to the municipal water supply system.

The building was surrounded by fruit trees which provided the residents with fruit when they were in season. Every family was assigned a plot of land for their own garden. And, since KJ's mother was the daughter of a gardener, they always had an abundance of fruit and vegetables.

(I): What do you recall about Jews in Lwów before the war?

KJ: There was a huge Jewish neighborhood along Krakowska Street. It was called Krakidały. Along both sides of this street there were small shops. They were all, or nearly all owned by Jews. In this market area, one could buy everything—produce, hardware and all sorts of junk. [Timestamp: 00:15:00]. Besides that, everyone got along with the 3 Jewish families that lived across the street from them. They even socialized during their respective holiday observances. Children of different nationalities and different faiths would spend a lot of time playing together. It was immediately before the war that the Ukrainians started to distinguish themselves. Before the war there was an emergence of the ND Party in Lwów, mostly made up of students who were mostly anti-Jewish.

If not for the war, KJ claims that most likely he would have married Salcia Wolf, a very good-looking Jewish girl that lived across the street. KJ also remembers her brother Moćko, who was KJ's age and she had an older brother Bużko. He was close in age to KJ's older brother. Salcia also had two other sisters, Itka and Cyrka. Some of the Jews from across the street from KJ's apartment building found a safe haven in the building and were kept hidden throughout the war. The building had unusual security measures that were very favorable for keeping Jews safe, while all the residents collaborated in keeping them secret. All properties affiliated with the water supply system were fenced in by a chain link fence and under guard at every entry point. The same was true around the power plant and the gas company. Many local Jews found safety among the residents of this building.

KJ provides specific details on this subject. Cyrka Wolf married someone whose last name was Teichman. Before the war, they owned a food store below where everyone in the neighborhood bought their produce. Once the war broke out, Cyrka moved in to live with KJ's family. On floor above, Itka (Salcia's sister) was kept hidden. Teichman himself was hidden a kilometer to the north, on a parcel of land that belonged to KJ's parents. On that parcel they raised rabbits to supplement their meat supply. These rabbits were raised in a barrack that was built on this parcel of land. Once a day, someone would come to feed the rabbits and they would feed Teichman at the same time. He spent the entire period of German occupation in this barrack.

From first grade until the present day, KJ was a Boy Scout. Throughout the war period, KJ participated in the Boys Scout's clandestine activities.

In his first years in high school, KJ was an outstanding student. Then he became interested in football, handball, and volleyball. In the winter he would go skiing and play hockey. With all these athletic interests, his grades suffered. His grades ended up being mostly satisfactory.

I,: How did you meet with Salcia?

KJ dismisses this question with laughter. As neighbors there was no formality to their meeting. She was just one of the kids with whom KJ played. He didn't become more aware of her in a romantic sense until they both became older.

I.: Did the parents have any objections to your relationship?

KJ: The parents talked about this problem. They wanted it to be a Jewish wedding or a Catholic wedding. However, Salcia kept saying that she was going to convert to Catholicism. It should be noted that Salcia's parents were not very religious nor were they strict kosher. They were quite assimilated.

I.: What languages did you know before the war?

JK: Ukrainian, as well as Polish. In school he was learning French. By the time of the war he spoke French quite fluently. That would be far from true right now.

I.: What about the Wolf family, what language did they speak at home?

KJ: They spoke Yiddish and Polish.

I.: Did you complete your high school graduation exams and continued with your studies?

KJ: In 1939, when the Russians came, they opened all institutions of learning. That year, KJ enrolled at three institutes, polytechnic, veterinary and medicine. After a year, he quit medicine and the polytechnic and remained in the veterinary institute. He continued there during the German occupation as well as during the second Russian occupation.

I.: Could you describe the day when the Russians entered Lwów?

On September 20th or 21st an order was given by the Polish authorities for the Poles to turn in all arms, to go home and to end any armed opposition towards the Russians. Along the path in front of KJ's house, KJ watched the Polish soldiers marching uphill, single file. From the other side, Russian tanks started to descend from the hill. Alongside came the infantry. Intermittently a truck (a ZIS 5) would come by with a piece of artillery in tow. Its tool kit consisted of a hammer and pliers.

The foot soldiers looked ragged. Their overcoats were roughly shorn from the bottom with scissors and threads hung from their bottoms. Their belts were made of unrecognizable material, but definitely not leather. They carried a rifle on which they carried a sack. People watching them doubted that their rifles or cannons could even fire. The whole procession looked so beggarly and weak that it was unimaginable. Their entry occurred through two main city thoroughfares and lasted from early mid-afternoon, the rest of the day and through the night.

Accommodating these troops forced the closing of all schools and institutions of learning. It took some two to three months before they were re-opened. Education under German occupation was much more limited. The Germans killed many university professors at Lwów University,

I.: How did your life under the occupation change?

KJ. For much worse. At the outset the water pump station workers were exceptionally well off, since they had a cooperative with a store. All the workers were members of this cooperative. When the war broke out, all the members took delivery of all sorts of comestibles--flour, grits, canned goods. They had an exceptionally large amount of food products. Other people were not so lucky. When the Russians arrived they confiscated everything, starting with money in the banks. Poles in the meantime had left the money for the defense of their country, for purchase of armaments. Only those who had savings in foreign currency were able to withdraw money from the banks. KJ's father was one of the lucky, because he held his savings partially in US \$, partially in zlotys and some of it in other currency. Then, the Russians levelled the exchange rate so that 1 ruble equaled 1 zloty and started to buy everything in sight. First there was a run on leather coats, then on watches. That resulted in severe shortages.

KJ's parents had good contacts with people in the surroundings of Lwów. In these villages, for US \$20.00 gold, one could buy two pigs and two calves. KJ's parents were further lucky in that they had a garden. Also, in Ternopol they had a house, behind which there was a garden nearly a hectare in size. And in this garden, one year they would grow wheat; another year, potatoes. KJ's made a small electric mill which they used for grinding the wheat. Others, who did not have such resources suffered terribly. The same happened under German occupation.

(At this point, the interviewer wants to know what KJ's father did at the water pump station. KJ goes into a detailed explanation of his job.) [Timestamp: 00:51:30]

I.: Did the residents of Lwów fear Russians?

KJ: Nah, not at all. They did not fear Russians or the Germans, even though the Germans could kill a Pole without any consequences.

I.: Do you recall the deportation and exile of Poles by the Russians?

KJ: Unquestionably. Russians deported families of Polish Army officers, families of higher-ranking civil functionaries, city officials, as well as random people that got caught up in their raids. Most Poles were always ready for deportation with their bags all packed. As a case in point, KJ mentions this incident in his building. At 2:00 AM a loud banging is heard at the entrance to the building. The NKVD entered the building. Their footsteps are audible throughout the staircase. KJ's apartment is one flight up. His heart jumped into his throat out of fear. The footsteps passed his apartment and continued climbing. Right away he began to feel relief. They finally made it to the apartment that belonged to the director of the water pumping station. It turned out that a Jew who had a quarrel with this director, tattled on him to the NKVD and they came for him. After an hour he was seen all packed and was taken away to the police station. His wife and children were left crying. His name was Konarek. He was taken away, never to be heard from again.

I.: Was it often said that many Jews collaborated with the Russians?

KJ: It didn't have to be said. It was well known. Every other Party Secretary was a Jew. Jews collaborated with the Russians. That doesn't mean, however that all of them did. During the war he knew people like that. Since then he has forgotten them.

Their collaboration didn't require much. All they had to do is to join the Communist Party.

KJ: During both Russian and German occupation, social life was limited. People did not socialize in restaurants. They would get together for evening parties or dances at people's home.

I.: Do you recall when the Germans entered Lwów?

KJ: It was June 1941. The lead elements were the infantry, who actually were Austrians. At first impression they seemed to be better outfitted than the Polish Army.

Lwów experienced many air raids. The city was encircled by some 20 searchlights. Many German planes were shot down once they were triangulated by the search lights. An air raid seemed like hell. There were loud explosions of bombs and anti-aircraft fire. The sky was lit up by flares and fires started burning in many places on the horizon. KJ observed all this from their apartment building. It offered a good view because it stood on a hill, while the city was in a valley that was surrounded by mountains.

I.: In July, after the Germans entered Lwów there were many anti-Jewish activities in the streets. Did you see anything of that?

KJ did not witness any of that but he heard that the Germans encouraged young people to "Beat the Jews!"

I.: The Germans also opened the prisons Brygidki and on Łącki Street. Have you been there?

KJ was not there, but knew from stories that he was told by a friend around his age who lived one flight above them. His name was Władysław Feder. His uncle was taken to the prison on Łącki Street.

Before retreating ahead of the Germans, the Russians executed all the inmates. The courtyard of the prison displayed a most macabre scene. Relatives of the executed came in search of their relatives. In the process they tossed bodies from one pile onto another. As the bodies were already decomposing, the courtyard was filled with a horrible stench. [Timestamp: 01:27:05]

I.: How did the life of Jews change under the German occupation?

KJ: At first there was no change. But after a certain period of time the Germans established a ghetto. Jews were rounded up and confined to the ghetto. From the ghetto they were taken to the northwestern part of town, beyond some ruins, where there used to be a forest. During World War I, people chopped down the forest to use the wood for heating. It was there that the Germans dug ditches. They threw Jews into those ditches, doused them with gasoline and burned the bodies. And, if the wind blew from that direction, the stench of burning bodies could be smelled in the whole the city.

I.: What happened to the Wolf family when the Germans entered Lwów?

KJ: All three families disappeared. One day the Germans came with a truck and 2 Jeeps and took away the grown-ups. Those who were not taken away then also disappeared. In general, KJ does not seem to know precisely what happened to all of them. He's not even sure what happened to Salcia from the time that the Germans arrived. He lost all contact with her.

KJ's narrative is difficult to follow when he describes the retreat of the Germans in 1944. There was some inexplicable massing of people that started to move in the direction of the

approaching Russians. Suddenly, the Germans opened fire on these people from machine guns and artillery units. It resulted in a massacre. The following morning, local people who probably knew the victims, came around with carts and carried off the corpses of their relatives. Even people who were hiding all this time in KJ's apartment building joined that spontaneous mass of people. KJ suggests that Cyrka and Teichman were lost in that chaos.

KJ admits that he did not receive any information about Salcia, except for rumors that she was hiding out and dyed her hair. After the war KJ did not inquire any further about Salcia. He did have contact with her uncle Moćko, who may have saved KJ's life during the 2nd Soviet occupation. [NB: Earlier in the narrative, KJ listed Moćko as Salcia's brother, not her uncle] Moćko however had no news of her. In fact, he was asking KJ about her.

[KJ's Story about Moćko] In 1939, KJ was listed by the local Soviet Selective Service as the equivalent to a 1A—qualified to serve in the military. Because KJ was very familiar with Lwów, he was often delegated to deliver call-up notices to others who were listed as 1A. At the same time, he worked clandestinely as a Boy Scout in the "Gray Columns." Whenever he had a call-up order for a Pole to report to the Soviet Army, his Boy Scout leaders instructed him to tear up the notice (so that the Pole didn't report to the Soviet Army), but to deliver the call-up notice to the Jews. KJ delivered such a notice to Moćko. Consequently, Moćko spent the war years serving in the Soviet Army.

Later, in the spring of 1945, during the 2nd Soviet occupation, KJ was picked up at the Institute by the NKVD. By coincidence, Moćko by then was an adjutant of that NKVD officer. On the 3rd day of interrogations, Moćko reported to his superior and noticed KJ. After exchanging warm greetings and the latest news, Moćko offered his superior officer a personal guarantee for KJ's integrity and honesty and thus secured KJ's release. Had he not intervened, most likely KJ would not have returned from the interrogation alive.

I.: How do you recall the second arrival of the Russians?

KJ: In 1944 the Russians entered Lwów along the same road as in 1939. But this time this was a totally different army. It was well equipped—modern tanks, and artillery pieces. The infantry was smartly dressed, in elegant uniforms. All of this evidenced American assistance. The backs of the buttons on their uniforms were embossed with the imprint: Made in the USA.
[Timestamp: 01:13:03] All the trucks were made by Studebaker.

I.: In 1939 many Poles from the west came to Lwów. Do you recall that?

KJ: KJ's family was directly impacted by that. They were fleeing from the Germans. They had 5 railroad men from Poznań living with them. There was no place to accommodate the number of people that arrived. They lived with them for 2-3 weeks. Afterwards, they took different routes to go back. Fortunately, the Russo-German border was not strictly guarded and there were many places where one could cross it.

At a point in the interview, when the Interviewer was trying to pin down some details about the massacre that took place in 1944 in front of KJ's building, KJ recalls when in 1939 the Polish soldiers were surrendering their arms to the Soviets and many Polish officers would commit

suicide with their side weapon. At the time, KJ did not understand such behavior. Subsequently he understood that these officers anticipated what awaited them at the hands of the Russians.

KJ essentially did not work during the war years. However, before the war, KJ's father was quite visionary. On the terrain of the water supply station there was a meteorological station. KJ's father headed this station. When the war started, his father listed the meteorological station in KJ's name and throughout the war, KJ was its director. During the German occupation, KJ had a certificate issued in Warsaw by the Luftwaffe that KJ was an essential worker and that the local authorities were supposed to extend to him any assistance he might need. This certificate prevented KJ from being deported with other Poles to labor camps in Germany. It was on account of this massive deportation that many of KJ's friends, after the war, never returned to Lwów, but instead made their way to England where they were able to finish their studies.

I.: On what did your role in the Boy Scout's "Gray Columns" depend?

KJ: On August 30, 1939 he was mobilized as a soldier in 40th Division of the Infantry in Lwów in a Boy Scout Company. In this Company, their task was to climb the water pressure tower. It served as an observation point to spot oncoming planes from the west. Based on their phoned in information, an air raid would be sounded over the city. Beneath this water tower there were 4 anti-aircraft positions which were purchased in England. The observers, during an air raid would serve the AA guns as suppliers of the ammunition.

Later, these gun positions were moved to Grochowska Street onto a fortified embankment. On September 12, scouts from KJ's Company observed Germans take up positions in the distance. Within a day they withdrew. There were some skirmishes and even some casualties.

[**Translator's note:** In accordance with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, this part of Poland was meant to be occupied by the Soviets. That explained the German's withdrawal.]

Although KJ is still in the Boy Scout, he served in the Gray Columns through the German occupation. During that period, they were subservient to the AK. [NB: Known as the Armja Krajowa.]

I.: How did it happen that you left Lwów?

KJ left Lwów in September 1945. He, as all the Poles were asked to evacuate to the west. Transportation was provided. The trip to Kraków took 2 weeks. From there, in pursuit of one of his professors from Lwów, he travelled to Lublin. His family went from Lwów to Poznań by the end of 1946.

I.: Have you met with Moćko again?

SJ met with him a number of times at home, before his Soviet Army unit decamped from Lwów. Subsequently, KJ learned that Moćko ended up in Jerusalem. When KJ and his wife visited Israel, SJ located Moćko, but they were unable to meet, because Moćko was in the hospital gravely ill.