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Summary

Tadeusz Torkowski was born in 1924 in Lviv, Poland (now in Ukraine).

Father worked in the bank, mother was a housewife. He had a younger sister and brother.

Parents had no Jewish friends, father had Jewish bosses. He describes his school years before the war. The students were Polish, Ukrainian, and 20 percent were Jewish. The Jewish students were markedly the best. Before the war there was a lot of antisemitism. Jews were called many derogatory names, for example "Parszywy Żydzie" (dirty Jew). He cites an anecdote ending with the death of a Jew. The antisemitism was incited by the church claiming that the Jews killed Jesus Christ. Once a year Polish students gathered to break glass of Jewish stores, supposedly as revenge for the Jews killing a Polish student. There was hunger. Trade with the Jews was common.

He then describes the Russian occupation which began in September 1939.

There was trade between the Russians and the local population. His father sold a bicycle for potatoes, and bought 50 kilograms of flour. The Russians were buying a lot of watches.

There were long lines for sugar and other shortages. NKWD (People Commissariat For Internal Affairs) were arresting wealthy people and taking them to prisons or sending them to Siberia.

In the very first days of German invasion in July 1941, prisons Leckiego and Brigitka were open. Many prisoners were murdered. There was a stench coming out and the Jews were forced to take the bodies out. He witnessed a fire at three synagogues and 10 Jews who were hanged. Jews went to the ghetto voluntarily. Poles felt sorry for the Jews.

There was only one way to escape and this was to run away with the Soviets in the very first days of the German occupation.

In the beginning he worked in the German military unit in the kitchen. He describes the Germans working there as elegant and polite. He mentions Jews working there as well, as lawyers. One had to work to avoid being sent to Germany as a slave laborer.

Towards the end of the war he worked in the theatre as a mechanic, ticket taker, etc. After the Russians liberated Lviv, he repatriated to Poland with almost the last transport on June 15, 1946 and settled first in Szczecin, then in Wrocław.