

When did you find out and what was your reaction when you found out the scale of the destruction of the Jewish people?

I first found out about it-- I'm sorry. I first found out about the extent of the atrocities of the Germans while I was still in the army, when the concentration camps were being liberated. But I really learned the full extent of it after I came back. I came back from the army in October, 1945. War ended in Europe in May, 1945.

I was completely devastated. Don't forget, this was my life. I was brought up in that milieu. I went to a Yiddish school, elementary school. I was a secular Jew in Poland, considering myself a Polish patriot. I was fully committed, you might say, to fighting for the right of the Jews in Poland, in Poland, not any place else. And my whole world sort of collapsed around me.

So I was homeless in that sense. Because when we first came to the United States, the thought didn't even enter our mind that we would stay here. The idea was that after the war was over, we would pack our bags and go back to Poland, to the extent that people didn't even get permanent apartments but were living in hotels because what's the point, you're just going to leave. So this was a devastating experience after I came back.

I did make one small contribution to the memory of this. In my last year of engineering school, I was engaged by John Hersey, who was then writing *The Wall*, to, a, garner documents by any means I could, libraries, books, memoirs, whatever it is in Polish, translate it into English. He gave me a wire recorder. There weren't any tape recorders yet. Very loose translation. He didn't want to get too close to it. And then what I consider the most interesting thing, look over the galleys for accuracy, because every incident in that book is based on an actual happening.

Now, when I was gathering these documents, I was having nightmares. It was actually the most horrible thing, I think, to read all these things and have to translate them. It was supposed to be a translation-- very difficult, by the way, if you know languages, reading in one language and talking in another language. Because the structure of the language is entirely different. But that's what he wanted. He didn't want the literal translation. He just wanted to have raw facts. So I did that. So that I consider my small contribution.

During the point where you were gathering the--

OK. The gathering of the materials for Hersey consisted of the following-- first, I was going to the library, reading whatever books were available. There were a few memoirs. Then there were a lot of articles and journals, descriptions. My job was in Polish. So I was exclusively from Polish to English. And the third were personal stories of people. I knew a lot of people. And by that time, a lot of them were in New York. And I would gather whatever I could and then try to translate it. And I would just simply-- there was such horrible stories, particularly some of them that ended up in the book.

There were stories, for instance, one that I knew the people. There was people hiding out under the ruins of the burning ghetto in a bunker, in an underground bunker. And there was a girl, a woman and her husband, and their little newborn baby. And the baby was crying, and everybody wanted to kill the baby because the Germans would find them.

And one of the heroes of the ghetto, and later they wrote a book about it, Bernard Goldstein, was the one in that bunker who said killing that baby is stooping to the matters of the Germans. And the baby was saved. Now, I know Bernard Goldstein, I know the girl who's the mother, I know the father, who later perished in the partisan vice, I know the baby. It was just heart-rending.

[OFF CAMERA WHISPERING].

OK?

Thank you.

You rolling?

Yeah.

Rolling, Tom? Andrew and Tom.