

1  
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:42,120

2  
00:00:42,120 --> 00:00:43,450  
Did you make a call?

3  
00:00:43,450 --> 00:00:46,495  
Yes, and it looks like--

4  
00:00:46,495 --> 00:00:50,260  
if we could do it  
[Background talking]

5  
00:00:50,260 --> 00:00:52,120  
OK, great.

6  
00:00:52,120 --> 00:00:55,360  
So what was life  
like in these cabins?

7  
00:00:55,360 --> 00:00:58,230  
Did you feel like  
you had a hard life?

8  
00:00:58,230 --> 00:01:00,120  
Well, it was a hard life.

9  
00:01:00,120 --> 00:01:02,290  
The worst part of  
the whole thing

10  
00:01:02,290 --> 00:01:05,470  
was a sense of hopelessness.

11  
00:01:05,470 --> 00:01:08,230  
That is, the war  
was going badly.

12  
00:01:08,230 --> 00:01:09,730  
We had some news.

13

00:01:09,730 --> 00:01:12,880  
There was some kind of a local  
newspaper that eventually

14

00:01:12,880 --> 00:01:17,500  
would find its way to the camp.

15

00:01:17,500 --> 00:01:20,290  
So there were no radios.

16

00:01:20,290 --> 00:01:23,220  
Well, actually, there was a  
bit of a loudspeaker radio,

17

00:01:23,220 --> 00:01:26,110  
on which we could get  
Moscow official news, which

18

00:01:26,110 --> 00:01:27,820  
was good enough.

19

00:01:27,820 --> 00:01:31,480  
But it was quite clear that  
the war was not going well.

20

00:01:31,480 --> 00:01:35,890  
The most heartrending  
time, for me at any rate

21

00:01:35,890 --> 00:01:41,260  
and I think for many others,  
too, was the defeat of France

22

00:01:41,260 --> 00:01:42,310  
because--

23

00:01:42,310 --> 00:01:44,740  
that was May 1940--

24

00:01:44,740 --> 00:01:49,540  
because somehow-- the camp  
was all Polish, basically

25  
00:01:49,540 --> 00:01:52,375  
50% Jewish, 50% Catholic.

26  
00:01:52,375 --> 00:01:55,300

27  
00:01:55,300 --> 00:02:02,530  
And we were all raised on  
this myth of great France,

28  
00:02:02,530 --> 00:02:07,040  
Napoleonic France, which the  
Poles considered, at least,

29  
00:02:07,040 --> 00:02:11,710  
the friend of Poland, and that  
the French would certainly

30  
00:02:11,710 --> 00:02:15,250  
be able to deal with the  
Germans as they managed to deal

31  
00:02:15,250 --> 00:02:18,280  
with them in World War I.

32  
00:02:18,280 --> 00:02:20,050  
We did not think  
much about England

33  
00:02:20,050 --> 00:02:23,950  
because people simply did not  
have any ties with England.

34  
00:02:23,950 --> 00:02:26,110  
America was  
completely out of it,

35  
00:02:26,110 --> 00:02:30,130  
far away and not interested in  
the war, and in the meantime,

36

00:02:30,130 --> 00:02:32,420  
Hitler was doing fairly well.

37  
00:02:32,420 --> 00:02:34,810  
And the defeat of  
France and the defeat

38  
00:02:34,810 --> 00:02:40,090  
in such a fantastically  
quick way--

39  
00:02:40,090 --> 00:02:42,940  
before you could know  
what was going on,

40  
00:02:42,940 --> 00:02:45,670  
France was already occupied.

41  
00:02:45,670 --> 00:02:50,440  
It made us feel that this  
is really an end of an era,

42  
00:02:50,440 --> 00:02:55,000  
that Europe will forever be  
divided between these two

43  
00:02:55,000 --> 00:02:58,060  
dictatorships, on  
the one side Stalin,

44  
00:02:58,060 --> 00:03:02,320  
on the other side  
Hitler, and that the--

45  
00:03:02,320 --> 00:03:06,310  
especially since they were  
very friendly in those days

46  
00:03:06,310 --> 00:03:11,020  
because this was before the  
war between Russia and Germany.

47  
00:03:11,020 --> 00:03:13,990

So the Germans who happened  
to be in our camp-- there

48  
00:03:13,990 --> 00:03:19,360  
was a family of Polish citizens  
but who were of German origin

49  
00:03:19,360 --> 00:03:21,940  
and who declared  
themselves German.

50  
00:03:21,940 --> 00:03:24,760  
They were treated much  
better than we were simply

51  
00:03:24,760 --> 00:03:26,920  
because they were German.

52  
00:03:26,920 --> 00:03:31,330  
And so all the rest  
of us were convinced

53  
00:03:31,330 --> 00:03:35,770  
that this is the end of the  
line, that we would never--

54  
00:03:35,770 --> 00:03:38,650  
I would never see my  
father, and I would never

55  
00:03:38,650 --> 00:03:44,170  
see my home and any freedom that  
you can speak of because there

56  
00:03:44,170 --> 00:03:46,640  
was really no running away.

57  
00:03:46,640 --> 00:03:48,850  
First of all, it was really  
impossible to run away,

58  
00:03:48,850 --> 00:03:51,970  
even though the guards

were not numerous.

59

00:03:51,970 --> 00:03:56,500

There were only three  
guards in this commandant.

60

00:03:56,500 --> 00:03:58,540

But where to run to?

61

00:03:58,540 --> 00:04:02,650

This was running from a small  
prison to a larger prison,

62

00:04:02,650 --> 00:04:04,870

and eventually  
you do get caught.

63

00:04:04,870 --> 00:04:07,870

And people did run away and  
were returned to the camp,

64

00:04:07,870 --> 00:04:09,940

and a big deal was  
made of their return.

65

00:04:09,940 --> 00:04:13,420

66

00:04:13,420 --> 00:04:14,410

So this was it.

67

00:04:14,410 --> 00:04:21,160

My life, from then  
on, was to cut timber,

68

00:04:21,160 --> 00:04:26,050

and the hopelessness was  
the worst part of it.

69

00:04:26,050 --> 00:04:31,750

As for food, until the break  
out of the war between Russia

70

00:04:31,750 --> 00:04:35,710  
and Germany, that is, until  
Hitler attacked Russia in June

71

00:04:35,710 --> 00:04:44,110  
22, 1941, we had parcels of food  
which my grandmother from Lw<sup>3</sup>w

72

00:04:44,110 --> 00:04:45,100  
would send us.

73

00:04:45,100 --> 00:04:47,080  
So this would reach us.

74

00:04:47,080 --> 00:04:51,730  
My father would help out from  
Vilna as long as he was there,

75

00:04:51,730 --> 00:04:57,280  
and locally, we would be  
getting our rations, which

76

00:04:57,280 --> 00:05:01,300  
included a little bit of  
bread and a little bit of--

77

00:05:01,300 --> 00:05:03,010  
and in the evening  
time, there was

78

00:05:03,010 --> 00:05:06,520  
some kind of soup and  
sometimes some meat.

79

00:05:06,520 --> 00:05:08,320  
But at any rate,  
the countryside,

80

00:05:08,320 --> 00:05:11,980  
the forests were just--

81

00:05:11,980 --> 00:05:16,000

you could pick mushrooms,  
and Russians and Poles

82  
00:05:16,000 --> 00:05:18,610  
are mushroom eaters  
and are not scared

83  
00:05:18,610 --> 00:05:20,830  
of mushrooms the way  
people are in this country

84  
00:05:20,830 --> 00:05:24,700  
and know mushrooms so  
that my mother sometimes

85  
00:05:24,700 --> 00:05:30,400  
would pick a tremendous  
basket of mushrooms.

86  
00:05:30,400 --> 00:05:33,880  
And that was very good food.

87  
00:05:33,880 --> 00:05:36,670  
In the summertime, there  
were berries of all kinds,

88  
00:05:36,670 --> 00:05:38,890  
which we could eat.

89  
00:05:38,890 --> 00:05:44,040  
I could not lie down  
during our lunch break.

90  
00:05:44,040 --> 00:05:48,300  
We had a half an hour  
break to eat what

91  
00:05:48,300 --> 00:05:50,490  
we took along with us to work.

92  
00:05:50,490 --> 00:05:52,440  
In the summertime,  
I couldn't lie down



93

00:05:52,440 --> 00:05:57,018  
because I would be completely  
smeared with blueberries.

94

00:05:57,018 --> 00:05:58,935  
You would have to pick  
your blueberries first.

95

00:05:58,935 --> 00:06:01,590

96

00:06:01,590 --> 00:06:05,370  
In summertime, the greatest  
scourge during working time

97

00:06:05,370 --> 00:06:06,900  
were the mosquitoes.

98

00:06:06,900 --> 00:06:10,170  
The country was-- those forests  
were completely infested with

99

00:06:10,170 --> 00:06:12,900  
mosquitoes so that  
sometimes you would--

100

00:06:12,900 --> 00:06:17,410  
if I wanted to sort  
of sit quietly,

101

00:06:17,410 --> 00:06:20,070  
I would have to put  
a sack on my head.

102

00:06:20,070 --> 00:06:22,530  
Otherwise, you'd be eaten alive.

103

00:06:22,530 --> 00:06:25,710

104

00:06:25,710 --> 00:06:30,340

When I joined this brigade, in  
my first days there they said,

105  
00:06:30,340 --> 00:06:33,630  
well, I was too young  
to work with an axe.

106  
00:06:33,630 --> 00:06:35,430  
That is, my colleagues  
in the brigade

107  
00:06:35,430 --> 00:06:36,660  
said that, not the Russians.

108  
00:06:36,660 --> 00:06:40,860  
The Russians thought that  
I was as good as anybody.

109  
00:06:40,860 --> 00:06:43,860  
And so they assigned to me  
a job which they thought

110  
00:06:43,860 --> 00:06:49,560  
was the easiest, and that  
was burning branches.

111  
00:06:49,560 --> 00:06:52,410  
Now, these were all  
coniferous trees,

112  
00:06:52,410 --> 00:06:58,770  
and they burned  
like firecrackers.

113  
00:06:58,770 --> 00:07:03,870  
We were all issued  
typical Russian clothing,

114  
00:07:03,870 --> 00:07:11,760  
which was sort of cotton jackets  
with quilted cotton inside

115  
00:07:11,760 --> 00:07:16,170

which burned on  
contact with any spark.

116  
00:07:16,170 --> 00:07:19,050  
I was supposed to drag--

117  
00:07:19,050 --> 00:07:21,870  
well, they would chop  
off the branches,

118  
00:07:21,870 --> 00:07:25,920  
and I was supposed to drag  
them to this big bonfire which

119  
00:07:25,920 --> 00:07:30,390  
was built when we came  
to work in the morning

120  
00:07:30,390 --> 00:07:31,530  
and burn them there.

121  
00:07:31,530 --> 00:07:36,750  
Well, you had to be careful  
not to stand too close

122  
00:07:36,750 --> 00:07:38,820  
and not to stand  
against the wind

123  
00:07:38,820 --> 00:07:40,920  
because then  
everything blew on you.

124  
00:07:40,920 --> 00:07:43,320  
So there was smoke,  
and there were sparks.

125  
00:07:43,320 --> 00:07:46,170  
And every now and  
then, I would see

126  
00:07:46,170 --> 00:07:49,890  
smoke coming from my jacket.

127  
00:07:49,890 --> 00:07:52,200  
At the end of the  
year, I probably

128  
00:07:52,200 --> 00:07:57,700  
had more holes in the jacket  
than any clothes left.

129  
00:07:57,700 --> 00:08:02,310  
And it was tremendously hot  
by the fire and very cold

130  
00:08:02,310 --> 00:08:05,250  
away from the fire, so  
I thought, at the end,

131  
00:08:05,250 --> 00:08:07,620  
that this was much  
harder than anything

132  
00:08:07,620 --> 00:08:11,130  
that they were doing because  
they were simply cutting

133  
00:08:11,130 --> 00:08:13,000  
their trees, chopping branches.

134  
00:08:13,000 --> 00:08:17,940  
And so finally, when I learned  
to do the same thing that they

135  
00:08:17,940 --> 00:08:19,950  
did, we decided to  
share the duties,

136  
00:08:19,950 --> 00:08:27,240  
and I then was assigned to the  
normal tree felling detachment.

137  
00:08:27,240 --> 00:08:30,840  
Did you develop any  
lifelong friendships?

138

00:08:30,840 --> 00:08:32,580

And how long were  
you in this camp?

139

00:08:32,580 --> 00:08:37,140

Well, I was there for  
a year and a half.

140

00:08:37,140 --> 00:08:39,990

That is, we arrived  
in July, I think

141

00:08:39,990 --> 00:08:45,720

around the 10th of July,  
1940, and my mother

142

00:08:45,720 --> 00:08:49,410

and I left on November 7.

143

00:08:49,410 --> 00:08:51,090

I remember that  
well because this

144

00:08:51,090 --> 00:08:59,530

is the Russian holiday, the  
Soviet holiday, of 1941.

145

00:08:59,530 --> 00:09:04,470

Now, everybody else  
had gone by then.

146

00:09:04,470 --> 00:09:06,120

Everybody was released.

147

00:09:06,120 --> 00:09:07,170

It's a long story.

148

00:09:07,170 --> 00:09:09,810

I don't know whether you  
want me to go into it,

149

00:09:09,810 --> 00:09:12,510  
but if you are interested--

150  
00:09:12,510 --> 00:09:15,840  
well, I have to  
backtrack a little bit,

151  
00:09:15,840 --> 00:09:19,590  
and this is the part of the  
Sugihara involvement in this.

152  
00:09:19,590 --> 00:09:22,740  
My father and his  
brother, my uncle,

153  
00:09:22,740 --> 00:09:28,440  
were those who were issued the  
Japanese transit visas, that

154  
00:09:28,440 --> 00:09:35,160  
is, first of all, the  
terminal visa to Curacao,

155  
00:09:35,160 --> 00:09:39,270  
which was a Dutch position,  
then a Japanese transit

156  
00:09:39,270 --> 00:09:44,010  
visa, and then a Soviet  
transit visa to get to Japan.

157  
00:09:44,010 --> 00:09:48,890  
So towards the beginning of--

158  
00:09:48,890 --> 00:09:49,650  
I'm sorry.

159  
00:09:49,650 --> 00:09:52,920  
In the early fall  
of 1940, about half

160  
00:09:52,920 --> 00:09:59,490  
a year after we got imprisoned,

my father and his brother

161  
00:09:59,490 --> 00:10:02,310  
completely legally  
left Lithuania

162  
00:10:02,310 --> 00:10:06,330  
with the Soviet transit  
visa to Vladivostok, which

163  
00:10:06,330 --> 00:10:09,570  
is the Russian port on the  
Pacific, and from there

164  
00:10:09,570 --> 00:10:14,100  
to Japan on those visas  
issued by Sugihara

165  
00:10:14,100 --> 00:10:16,860  
against the instructions  
of his government.

166  
00:10:16,860 --> 00:10:20,220  
This was a most unusual story,  
sort of like the Schindler

167  
00:10:20,220 --> 00:10:21,810  
story in Krakow.

168  
00:10:21,810 --> 00:10:24,870

169  
00:10:24,870 --> 00:10:29,700  
And so they arrived  
in this country

170  
00:10:29,700 --> 00:10:35,410  
a couple of months  
before Pearl Harbor,

171  
00:10:35,410 --> 00:10:41,050  
in the spring or  
early summer of 1941.

172  
00:10:41,050 --> 00:10:45,490  
How did your father feel  
leaving you and your mother

173  
00:10:45,490 --> 00:10:46,330  
back in Russia?

174  
00:10:46,330 --> 00:10:48,100  
Well, I can only  
imagine how he felt,

175  
00:10:48,100 --> 00:10:50,950  
but he must have felt awful.

176  
00:10:50,950 --> 00:10:53,560  
But for us, for all  
of us, I told you

177  
00:10:53,560 --> 00:10:57,820  
that our main concern  
and our main fear

178  
00:10:57,820 --> 00:11:01,180  
was that this would become  
a permanent situation,

179  
00:11:01,180 --> 00:11:03,550  
and having a father  
and the husband

180  
00:11:03,550 --> 00:11:08,110  
outside in the free world  
was the only ray of hope.

181  
00:11:08,110 --> 00:11:12,820  
So we were actually very  
happy that he got out

182  
00:11:12,820 --> 00:11:16,210  
because eventually we  
knew that Lithuania,



183

00:11:16,210 --> 00:11:19,150  
as it did, eventually,  
would become part

184

00:11:19,150 --> 00:11:21,940  
of the Soviet  
Empire anyway, so he

185

00:11:21,940 --> 00:11:24,020  
would fare no better than me.

186

00:11:24,020 --> 00:11:27,130  
And besides, having  
been a judge, that is,

187

00:11:27,130 --> 00:11:32,620  
a civil employee, in Poland,  
he would be really treated

188

00:11:32,620 --> 00:11:35,260  
very roughly by the Russians.

189

00:11:35,260 --> 00:11:39,340  
So when they left, we  
knew perfectly well

190

00:11:39,340 --> 00:11:40,630  
how they were going.

191

00:11:40,630 --> 00:11:44,620  
We knew that they would  
pass within 160 kilometers

192

00:11:44,620 --> 00:11:49,810  
of our camp because they would  
pass through the same railroad

193

00:11:49,810 --> 00:11:55,720  
station, Sharya, where we ended  
our railroad trip from Lw<sup>3</sup>w

194

00:11:55,720 --> 00:11:58,270

because this was on this  
main line between Moscow

195  
00:11:58,270 --> 00:12:00,070  
and Vladivostok.

196  
00:12:00,070 --> 00:12:02,020  
They came to Moscow.

197  
00:12:02,020 --> 00:12:06,700  
They bought a tremendous amount  
of clothing still in Lithuania,

198  
00:12:06,700 --> 00:12:10,360  
and from Moscow, they sent  
us two very large sacks

199  
00:12:10,360 --> 00:12:11,470  
full of stuff.

200  
00:12:11,470 --> 00:12:15,303  
And that kept us going  
for a long, long time.

201  
00:12:15,303 --> 00:12:17,095  
Instead of referring  
to them as "they," can

202  
00:12:17,095 --> 00:12:18,250  
you say "my father"?

203  
00:12:18,250 --> 00:12:19,040  
Yes, I'm sorry.

204  
00:12:19,040 --> 00:12:23,830  
My father and my uncle  
did that, the two families

205  
00:12:23,830 --> 00:12:26,860  
because we were separated.

206  
00:12:26,860 --> 00:12:29,890

To come back through our  
deportation from Lw<sup>3</sup>w,

207  
00:12:29,890 --> 00:12:34,540  
as I told you, we were  
deported by streets.

208  
00:12:34,540 --> 00:12:39,190  
My aunt, and my cousin,  
and my grandmother

209  
00:12:39,190 --> 00:12:43,780  
lived separately on a different  
street than my mother and I,

210  
00:12:43,780 --> 00:12:47,500  
so we were deported  
in different ways.

211  
00:12:47,500 --> 00:12:49,870  
We were deported  
on the same day,

212  
00:12:49,870 --> 00:12:52,930  
but we made it into  
different trains.

213  
00:12:52,930 --> 00:12:55,900  
And they ended up in  
the Ural Mountains,

214  
00:12:55,900 --> 00:13:02,110  
and we ended up in this camp,  
I would say 400 miles northeast

215  
00:13:02,110 --> 00:13:03,040  
of Moscow.

216  
00:13:03,040 --> 00:13:05,840  
How'd your mother  
respond to that?

217  
00:13:05,840 --> 00:13:10,550

Well, this is the way it worked.

218

00:13:10,550 --> 00:13:14,500

We had no idea until  
we ended up that we--

219

00:13:14,500 --> 00:13:17,140

of course, we were  
deported separately,

220

00:13:17,140 --> 00:13:21,580

so we knew that we  
would be separate.

221

00:13:21,580 --> 00:13:25,540

But we didn't know, actually,  
that they were deported.

222

00:13:25,540 --> 00:13:29,770

Everything, you see, was  
done via LwÅ³w, that is,

223

00:13:29,770 --> 00:13:31,910

writing to my grandmother.

224

00:13:31,910 --> 00:13:34,300

They wrote to my grandmother.

225

00:13:34,300 --> 00:13:36,250

My father wrote  
to my grandmother,

226

00:13:36,250 --> 00:13:39,490

so the grandmother became the  
hub of all this communication

227

00:13:39,490 --> 00:13:40,870

network.

228

00:13:40,870 --> 00:13:45,160

And from her, we learned where  
they were, where my father was,

229

00:13:45,160 --> 00:13:49,830  
and this is how we  
communicated with one another.

230

00:13:49,830 --> 00:13:52,050  
So they were in the Urals.

231

00:13:52,050 --> 00:13:59,120  
We were in this district called  
the Vologda District, and--

232

00:13:59,120 --> 00:14:02,630  
sorry-- when I say "they"  
I mean my aunt, her son,

233

00:14:02,630 --> 00:14:06,020  
and my grandmother.

234

00:14:06,020 --> 00:14:18,710  
And after the outbreak of the  
Ruso-German war in June '41,

235

00:14:18,710 --> 00:14:24,710  
the Russians developed, all  
of a sudden, friendly ties

236

00:14:24,710 --> 00:14:31,070  
with the Allies, and Russia,  
from being an ally of Germany,

237

00:14:31,070 --> 00:14:36,470  
overnight became an ally  
of the US and England

238

00:14:36,470 --> 00:14:41,150  
and resumed normal  
diplomatic relations.

239

00:14:41,150 --> 00:14:44,090  
And at the same time,  
they had no choice

240

00:14:44,090 --> 00:14:48,260  
but to resume and to recognize  
the Polish government-in-exile

241  
00:14:48,260 --> 00:14:50,210  
in London.

242  
00:14:50,210 --> 00:14:55,400  
And one of the conditions  
imposed upon the Russians

243  
00:14:55,400 --> 00:14:59,120  
by the Poles, presumably  
with the help of the British,

244  
00:14:59,120 --> 00:15:03,230  
was that all Polish citizens  
imprisoned in Russia--

245  
00:15:03,230 --> 00:15:05,750  
and there were literally  
hundreds and hundreds

246  
00:15:05,750 --> 00:15:09,410  
of thousands, if not  
millions in Russia--

247  
00:15:09,410 --> 00:15:14,900  
would be allowed to  
join the Polish Army

248  
00:15:14,900 --> 00:15:17,610  
and released from camps.

249  
00:15:17,610 --> 00:15:19,940  
This was called the amnesty.

250  
00:15:19,940 --> 00:15:23,480  
There was no sentence, but  
still, there was an amnesty.

251  
00:15:23,480 --> 00:15:29,400  
This amnesty came out

in late August of 1941,

252

00:15:29,400 --> 00:15:36,050  
and around September time, a  
man came from the local NKVD

253

00:15:36,050 --> 00:15:39,560  
district, that is, the  
Russian secret police,

254

00:15:39,560 --> 00:15:45,230  
with an edict that all people  
detained in the camp should

255

00:15:45,230 --> 00:15:47,150  
be freed as long  
as they can prove

256

00:15:47,150 --> 00:15:50,360  
that they were Polish citizens.

257

00:15:50,360 --> 00:15:54,110  
Now, again, to backtrack  
a bit, my father, when

258

00:15:54,110 --> 00:16:01,280  
he got to Japan, decided that  
the more foreign documents

259

00:16:01,280 --> 00:16:05,640  
he sends us the better  
for us, and he sent us

260

00:16:05,640 --> 00:16:10,190  
at first an  
Argentinean visa which

261

00:16:10,190 --> 00:16:12,770  
did us no good whatsoever  
because we had no passport

262

00:16:12,770 --> 00:16:14,360  
to put it on.

263  
00:16:14,360 --> 00:16:17,840  
All of these things  
were obtained probably

264  
00:16:17,840 --> 00:16:18,830  
in an illegal way.

265  
00:16:18,830 --> 00:16:22,610  
I don't know how  
he did it in Tokyo.

266  
00:16:22,610 --> 00:16:25,460  
And the last document  
that he sent us

267  
00:16:25,460 --> 00:16:28,790  
was an actual Chilean passport.

268  
00:16:28,790 --> 00:16:31,040  
That is, my mother got  
a Chilean passport,

269  
00:16:31,040 --> 00:16:34,280  
and I got a Chilean  
passport, completely valid

270  
00:16:34,280 --> 00:16:36,860  
Chilean documents,  
for which he must

271  
00:16:36,860 --> 00:16:40,580  
have paid some sum of money.

272  
00:16:40,580 --> 00:16:43,730  
These documents came  
through official mail.

273  
00:16:43,730 --> 00:16:46,200  
The Russians opened  
the mail regularly.

274



00:16:46,200 --> 00:16:50,120  
And so the commandant called us  
in, and he said, what is this?

275  
00:16:50,120 --> 00:16:52,130  
Well, we said we  
didn't know, but I

276  
00:16:52,130 --> 00:16:55,470  
could read what it said, that  
these are Chilean passports.

277  
00:16:55,470 --> 00:16:57,620  
He requisitioned  
the whole thing.

278  
00:16:57,620 --> 00:17:00,170  
We never saw them again.

279  
00:17:00,170 --> 00:17:05,990  
When the amnesty was  
announced for Polish detainees

280  
00:17:05,990 --> 00:17:11,540  
in the camp, everybody  
was allowed to go.

281  
00:17:11,540 --> 00:17:16,040  
When our turn came,  
he said, you stay.

282  
00:17:16,040 --> 00:17:17,750  
We said, why?

283  
00:17:17,750 --> 00:17:20,569  
That is, my mother  
and I. And he said,

284  
00:17:20,569 --> 00:17:22,849  
because the amnesty  
is for Polish citizens

285  
00:17:22,849 --> 00:17:25,640

and not for Chilean citizens.

286

00:17:25,640 --> 00:17:31,580

Well, this was the last  
thing that we counted on.

287

00:17:31,580 --> 00:17:35,300

But there was no way  
out, so we started

288

00:17:35,300 --> 00:17:40,040

bombarding the Polish embassy  
in Kuibysheva-- at that time,

289

00:17:40,040 --> 00:17:43,280

the foreign embassy from  
Moscow were already evacuated

290

00:17:43,280 --> 00:17:46,820

because the Germans were  
very close to Moscow

291

00:17:46,820 --> 00:17:50,960

to Kuibysheva, a  
city on the Volga.

292

00:17:50,960 --> 00:17:53,060

Today it's called Samara--

293

00:17:53,060 --> 00:17:59,690

and eventually established  
some contact with them

294

00:17:59,690 --> 00:18:04,400

and eventually managed  
to let my father

295

00:18:04,400 --> 00:18:08,300

know, again through the  
Polish embassy in Kuibysheva,

296

00:18:08,300 --> 00:18:10,490

that we were not

able to get out,

297

00:18:10,490 --> 00:18:12,260

that something had  
to be done for us

298

00:18:12,260 --> 00:18:15,230

to prove that we  
were polish citizens.

299

00:18:15,230 --> 00:18:16,940

Well, it took a long time.

300

00:18:16,940 --> 00:18:20,570

There was September, and we  
started doing it immediately

301

00:18:20,570 --> 00:18:24,380

when everybody left because it  
was an absolutely eerie feeling

302

00:18:24,380 --> 00:18:28,730

to be in this camp for 300  
people, in which there were

303

00:18:28,730 --> 00:18:33,050

just my mother and I and the  
German family who were detained

304

00:18:33,050 --> 00:18:36,710

also because now they turned  
out to be enemies of the Soviet

305

00:18:36,710 --> 00:18:37,460

Union.

306

00:18:37,460 --> 00:18:39,620

So there were four  
of us living there.

307

00:18:39,620 --> 00:18:42,350

I had to go to work,  
except that now I

308  
00:18:42,350 --> 00:18:45,500  
had to go to work with the  
Russians and not with the Poles

309  
00:18:45,500 --> 00:18:49,310  
because there were  
no Poles left.

310  
00:18:49,310 --> 00:18:55,490  
And so it went through  
October, and November came.

311  
00:18:55,490 --> 00:19:00,830  
November 7 was the big  
holiday, the anniversary

312  
00:19:00,830 --> 00:19:05,630  
of the October Revolution  
celebrated in November.

313  
00:19:05,630 --> 00:19:07,280  
And I told my  
mother, listen, there

314  
00:19:07,280 --> 00:19:08,910  
is nothing we can do here.

315  
00:19:08,910 --> 00:19:12,170  
We will spend the whole  
winter here otherwise.

316  
00:19:12,170 --> 00:19:16,880  
Let's go without telling  
anybody to Nikolsk,

317  
00:19:16,880 --> 00:19:22,550  
which was a town region  
center, a small town, 5,000

318  
00:19:22,550 --> 00:19:27,890  
people, where there was the  
local NKVD headquarters.

319  
00:19:27,890 --> 00:19:30,560  
And so very early in the  
morning, my mother and I

320  
00:19:30,560 --> 00:19:35,240  
set out on foot, and  
we went to Nikolsk,

321  
00:19:35,240 --> 00:19:39,230  
and we made it  
eventually by afternoon.

322  
00:19:39,230 --> 00:19:40,610  
It was holiday.

323  
00:19:40,610 --> 00:19:42,170  
Everything was  
closed, of course,

324  
00:19:42,170 --> 00:19:44,660  
but we waited until  
the following day

325  
00:19:44,660 --> 00:19:47,390  
and went straight  
to this NKVD office

326  
00:19:47,390 --> 00:19:51,770  
to tell this guy what was going  
on, that our commandant was

327  
00:19:51,770 --> 00:19:52,910  
completely in the dark.

328  
00:19:52,910 --> 00:19:55,070  
He knew nothing what  
to do-- he knew nothing

329  
00:19:55,070 --> 00:19:57,410  
about those Chilean  
passports and that we

330

00:19:57,410 --> 00:20:01,010  
were a normal Polish citizens  
and should be allowed to leave.

331

00:20:01,010 --> 00:20:04,550  
He gave us a tremendous  
lecture for leaving the camp

332

00:20:04,550 --> 00:20:07,160  
without permission,  
and there was

333

00:20:07,160 --> 00:20:09,950  
a moment when I was afraid that  
they would really imprison us

334

00:20:09,950 --> 00:20:11,330  
for this whole thing.

335

00:20:11,330 --> 00:20:14,270  
But then he softened,  
and he said, well,

336

00:20:14,270 --> 00:20:17,540  
it's your luck that just  
two days ago an order

337

00:20:17,540 --> 00:20:25,580  
came to release you, and so  
you go right back to the camp,

338

00:20:25,580 --> 00:20:32,610  
and you can come back to Nikolsk  
whatever you are able to do so.

339

00:20:32,610 --> 00:20:37,370  
So this was already-- there  
was plenty of snow all around.

340

00:20:37,370 --> 00:20:41,310  
We got on a sled with some  
collective farmers who

341

00:20:41,310 --> 00:20:43,310

were going in the  
same direction,

342

00:20:43,310 --> 00:20:45,800

and eventually we made  
it back to the camp.

343

00:20:45,800 --> 00:20:48,560

I guess it was on  
the 9th of November.

344

00:20:48,560 --> 00:20:51,170

By that time, they were  
convinced in the camp

345

00:20:51,170 --> 00:20:53,990

that we had escaped completely.

346

00:20:53,990 --> 00:20:59,090

When we appeared, first of all,  
they were shocked to see us,

347

00:20:59,090 --> 00:21:02,450

and secondly, they  
were immensely angry

348

00:21:02,450 --> 00:21:05,360

that we got away  
without telling anybody

349

00:21:05,360 --> 00:21:07,430

because the commandant  
was afraid that he

350

00:21:07,430 --> 00:21:10,260

would be responsible for this.

351

00:21:10,260 --> 00:21:15,650

So when we came, he removed  
from our room everything that

352

00:21:15,650 --> 00:21:17,480  
belonged to them, to the camp.

353  
00:21:17,480 --> 00:21:21,380  
That is, all the beds were  
removed, all the mattresses,

354  
00:21:21,380 --> 00:21:24,890  
the mattresses filled  
with hay, everything

355  
00:21:24,890 --> 00:21:27,410  
to make our life  
as uncomfortable as

356  
00:21:27,410 --> 00:21:31,670  
possible without  
actually imprisoning us,

357  
00:21:31,670 --> 00:21:33,740  
for which he had no  
authority because we

358  
00:21:33,740 --> 00:21:39,080  
came with this piece of paper  
from the NKVD in Nikolsk.

359  
00:21:39,080 --> 00:21:42,170  
We stayed there until  
we could put whatever

360  
00:21:42,170 --> 00:21:47,750  
we had left together, and then  
we went back to Nikolsk, again,

361  
00:21:47,750 --> 00:21:49,890  
partly on foot, partly--

362  
00:21:49,890 --> 00:21:53,330  
there was some collective  
farmers who were going there--

363  
00:21:53,330 --> 00:22:01,700



and wanting to go out, that  
is, to leave this whole area

364  
00:22:01,700 --> 00:22:04,970  
and move towards those  
places with the Polish Army

365  
00:22:04,970 --> 00:22:07,280  
was forming.

366  
00:22:07,280 --> 00:22:10,280  
Well, to our great  
dismay, we found out

367  
00:22:10,280 --> 00:22:14,000  
that there was simply  
no way, in wintertime,

368  
00:22:14,000 --> 00:22:15,380  
to get out of there.

369  
00:22:15,380 --> 00:22:18,770  
The place was  
completely snowbound.

370  
00:22:18,770 --> 00:22:23,070  
There was no transportation  
available whatsoever,

371  
00:22:23,070 --> 00:22:28,760  
and if one wanted to, I  
suppose one could go on a sled.

372  
00:22:28,760 --> 00:22:34,790  
But going on a sled 160  
kilometers in this winter--

373  
00:22:34,790 --> 00:22:38,180  
this was not anything  
that we wanted to try.

374  
00:22:38,180 --> 00:22:43,830  
And so we were forced to

spend the whole winter of 1941

375

00:22:43,830 --> 00:22:50,120  
and the beginning of '42 in  
this small town of Nikolsk,

376

00:22:50,120 --> 00:22:54,140  
where I found work as a  
janitor in a local school.

377

00:22:54,140 --> 00:22:56,090  
And my mother wasn't  
doing anything.

378

00:22:56,090 --> 00:22:59,870  
We lived privately in a family  
of very lovely Russians,

379

00:22:59,870 --> 00:23:05,000  
a couple who had three  
sons, and of three

380

00:23:05,000 --> 00:23:08,160  
of them were killed in the  
very beginning of the war.

381

00:23:08,160 --> 00:23:08,660  
They.

382

00:23:08,660 --> 00:23:13,580  
Were drafted, and so they  
almost sort of adopted me

383

00:23:13,580 --> 00:23:16,520  
as their fourth son.

384

00:23:16,520 --> 00:23:18,980  
And there we--

385

00:23:18,980 --> 00:23:21,860  
I don't know whether I'm not  
going with too much detail

386

00:23:21,860 --> 00:23:22,700  
into all this.

387

00:23:22,700 --> 00:23:24,920  
Well, you'll do with  
it what you want.

388

00:23:24,920 --> 00:23:25,880  
Right.

389

00:23:25,880 --> 00:23:29,330  
So then you went and caught up  
with your grandmother, correct?

390

00:23:29,330 --> 00:23:31,550  
Well, then what  
we did-- we tried

391

00:23:31,550 --> 00:23:33,710  
to get out in the springtime.

392

00:23:33,710 --> 00:23:36,920  
In the springtime, the only  
way to get out is by boat.

393

00:23:36,920 --> 00:23:39,890  
The small river that  
runs through the city,

394

00:23:39,890 --> 00:23:50,045  
again, becomes big enough to  
allow boats to come to Nikolsk,

395

00:23:50,045 --> 00:23:53,650  
and this is the time when they  
can ship out whatever they have

396

00:23:53,650 --> 00:23:56,080  
manufactured over the winter.

397

00:23:56,080 --> 00:23:58,420  
And we went on

one of those ships

398

00:23:58,420 --> 00:24:02,560  
to the first railroad  
station, which

399

00:24:02,560 --> 00:24:06,640  
is in a town called Kotlas,  
a horrible town which

400

00:24:06,640 --> 00:24:10,300  
was the main town  
for resettlement

401

00:24:10,300 --> 00:24:14,320  
of prisoners coming from  
the extreme Russian North.

402

00:24:14,320 --> 00:24:20,530  
So what you saw there were  
truly scenes out of Dante,

403

00:24:20,530 --> 00:24:27,490  
these emaciated corpses walking  
around completely starved,

404

00:24:27,490 --> 00:24:31,690  
looking for some way out  
without any money whatsoever.

405

00:24:31,690 --> 00:24:35,530  
The Poles were actually doing  
better than the Russians

406

00:24:35,530 --> 00:24:40,300  
because, by that time, the  
Polish government-in-exile

407

00:24:40,300 --> 00:24:45,220  
in London organized  
a network of--

408

00:24:45,220 --> 00:24:47,920

they were called  
delegaturas, but they

409  
00:24:47,920 --> 00:24:52,060  
were sort of minor  
consulates all over Russia

410  
00:24:52,060 --> 00:24:55,870  
for Polish citizens  
who were released.

411  
00:24:55,870 --> 00:24:58,810  
And not only were they  
helping these people

412  
00:24:58,810 --> 00:25:03,400  
to get out and join  
the army, but they also

413  
00:25:03,400 --> 00:25:06,820  
had things to give  
them, food and clothing.

414  
00:25:06,820 --> 00:25:08,950  
Clothing was very  
important because even

415  
00:25:08,950 --> 00:25:12,640  
if we did need that  
clothing it could be sold,

416  
00:25:12,640 --> 00:25:17,350  
and the money could be used  
to buy food or exchange

417  
00:25:17,350 --> 00:25:22,750  
because barter was the main  
form of trade in those days.

418  
00:25:22,750 --> 00:25:25,900  
And in the camp,  
you see, in order

419

00:25:25,900 --> 00:25:30,280  
to get some potatoes,  
I would go on Sundays,

420  
00:25:30,280 --> 00:25:31,960  
when we didn't work.

421  
00:25:31,960 --> 00:25:34,840  
I would take a small  
sled, and I would

422  
00:25:34,840 --> 00:25:38,740  
go with some shirt or  
some article of clothing

423  
00:25:38,740 --> 00:25:43,060  
and go from one hut to another  
of a collective farmer,

424  
00:25:43,060 --> 00:25:46,210  
asking whether they would trade  
some potatoes for the shirt.

425  
00:25:46,210 --> 00:25:48,100  
And occasionally  
you we lucky enough

426  
00:25:48,100 --> 00:25:54,130  
that somebody would do that,  
and this is how we got potatoes.

427  
00:25:54,130 --> 00:26:00,623  
But they were exceedingly  
poor themselves, cows--

428  
00:26:00,623 --> 00:26:01,706  
should we take it, or not?

429  
00:26:01,706 --> 00:26:02,430  
[PHONE RINGING]

430  
00:26:02,430 --> 00:26:05,070  
[Background talking]

431  
00:26:05,070 --> 00:26:08,380  
Were you surprised by the  
attitude of this Russian family

432  
00:26:08,380 --> 00:26:10,540  
taking you in?

433  
00:26:10,540 --> 00:26:12,730  
Weren't they supposed  
to be your enemies?

434  
00:26:12,730 --> 00:26:14,650  
No, no.

435  
00:26:14,650 --> 00:26:20,530  
That is the great difference  
between Russia and Germany.

436  
00:26:20,530 --> 00:26:23,800  
We had the feeling  
that we were--

437  
00:26:23,800 --> 00:26:28,000  
of course, we were mistreated,  
but the Russians around us

438  
00:26:28,000 --> 00:26:30,160  
were mistreated as well.

439  
00:26:30,160 --> 00:26:33,280  
And to the Russians,  
we were a novelty.

440  
00:26:33,280 --> 00:26:36,700  
We were, in many ways,  
a breath of fresh air

441  
00:26:36,700 --> 00:26:40,150  
coming from what they  
considered the West,

442

00:26:40,150 --> 00:26:42,670  
and they were hungry  
for stories how

443  
00:26:42,670 --> 00:26:45,400  
life was there before the war.

444  
00:26:45,400 --> 00:26:49,990  
They were tremendously  
friendly throughout.

445  
00:26:49,990 --> 00:26:53,230  
My personal  
experiences in Russia

446  
00:26:53,230 --> 00:26:56,560  
and my personal relations  
with the Russians

447  
00:26:56,560 --> 00:27:01,460  
are invariably excellent, and  
I love going back to Russia.

448  
00:27:01,460 --> 00:27:03,100  
Did you speak Russian  
at that point?

449  
00:27:03,100 --> 00:27:05,320  
By that time, I began  
learning Russian.

450  
00:27:05,320 --> 00:27:06,670  
You see, this was the--

451  
00:27:06,670 --> 00:27:10,210  
in the camp, I learned  
nothing because we were all

452  
00:27:10,210 --> 00:27:13,850  
using Polish to each other.

453  
00:27:13,850 --> 00:27:17,710  
We learned enough to



understand those Russian guides

454

00:27:17,710 --> 00:27:22,390  
who were with us and who taught  
us how to do this or that,

455

00:27:22,390 --> 00:27:27,700  
but our normal conversations  
were in Polish.

456

00:27:27,700 --> 00:27:35,620  
So I knew no more Russian at  
the end of this detainment

457

00:27:35,620 --> 00:27:37,195  
as I did when I started.

458

00:27:37,195 --> 00:27:39,880

459

00:27:39,880 --> 00:27:44,680  
I started learning Russian when  
I came to this town of Nikolsk,

460

00:27:44,680 --> 00:27:47,200  
speaking with the  
old man, the Russian,

461

00:27:47,200 --> 00:27:52,630  
the father of the family,  
a charming family.

462

00:27:52,630 --> 00:27:54,700  
They would share  
with us their food,

463

00:27:54,700 --> 00:27:59,860  
and really, I was  
sorry to leave them

464

00:27:59,860 --> 00:28:03,850  
when we were actually going  
away to that railroad station

465  
00:28:03,850 --> 00:28:05,860  
in Kotlas.

466  
00:28:05,860 --> 00:28:10,000  
So this was just one of the  
many very happy experiences

467  
00:28:10,000 --> 00:28:14,740  
with the native population,  
not necessarily Russian.

468  
00:28:14,740 --> 00:28:22,960  
They could be of any  
Soviet ethnic group.

469  
00:28:22,960 --> 00:28:27,820  
For instance, later on, when  
we lived in Central Asia,

470  
00:28:27,820 --> 00:28:32,530  
in Tajikistan, the  
Tajiks were awfully nice.

471  
00:28:32,530 --> 00:28:36,700  
They are related, at  
least linguistically,

472  
00:28:36,700 --> 00:28:39,010  
to the Afghanistanis.

473  
00:28:39,010 --> 00:28:42,190  
And we lived in an  
Armenian family,

474  
00:28:42,190 --> 00:28:44,080  
and these Armenians were--

475  
00:28:44,080 --> 00:28:47,110  
you couldn't imagine  
a nicer family.

476

00:28:47,110 --> 00:28:52,340  
Again, both my mother and I  
were completely sort of adopted

477  
00:28:52,340 --> 00:28:54,050  
into their families.

478  
00:28:54,050 --> 00:28:55,820  
Whenever there was  
a family holiday,

479  
00:28:55,820 --> 00:29:00,260  
we were involved  
in it, and this is

480  
00:29:00,260 --> 00:29:03,620  
quite a story, those Armenians.

481  
00:29:03,620 --> 00:29:05,600  
If there is time, I  
would be happy to talk

482  
00:29:05,600 --> 00:29:07,760  
to you about that.

483  
00:29:07,760 --> 00:29:09,410  
[INAUDIBLE]

484  
00:29:09,410 --> 00:29:10,960  
Yeah.

485  
00:29:10,960 --> 00:31:10,000