

**Interview with Jan Nowak
September 18, 1996**

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: Why don't we start, if you're ready.

Answer: Sure.

Q: Just by a -- having you say your name and identifying yourself.

A: Yes, m-my name is **Jan Nowak Jeziorński**. The **Nowak** is the **nom de guerre**, and my real family name is **Jeziorński**.

Q: I'd like to begin with you telling me where you were, and what was happening in your life at the end of the war.

A: Well, I was the first survivor of the **Warsaw** uprising who was sent as an emissary by the Polish commander in chief of the underground army, and of the **Warsaw** uprising to **London**, with microfilms, with the archives of the uprising. And the first one who reached **London**, on 22nd of January, '45. And of course, I did work for some time with the Polish authorities, debriefing them, and also British and American authorities, lecturing, writing, until I was hired by the Polish section of the **BBC**, in '48. And that was the beginning of my radio career. [sneezes] Excuse me. I was trained in my profession as a broadcaster by the **BBC**, and I stayed with the corporation until the end of '51. And th-then I was appointed the first director of the Polish service of Radio Free **Europe** in **Munich**. And I had to organize the entire operation, all day operation, from the scratch. I was the first Pole who was hired, and my job was to recruit people to organize the operation, to create, you know, the schedule, the programming, and all that, unfortunately. So I started a sort of a second chapter of my life with Radio Free **Europe**, and this was probably, from the perspective of my life, the most important job I had. Much more important than during the war, because during the war I was an emissary, and I was very active in the Polish underground movement. But as an emissary I was rather a witness, an eyewitness of the game between **Moscow, London, Washington**, and I saw the moon from both sides, from the perspective of **London**, and in **Warsaw**. But I cannot say that I did really influence any -- any decisions or events. While in the radio, we learned really that we have much greater influence that could have been expected. And I feel, and this is what the audience say, including such people as [indecipherable] opposition leaders, that we did have a considerable impact on the development in **Poland** between '52 and '89 when -- when **Poland** was liberated, in a way. So this was my most important period of -- of la -- of my life.

Q: I want to talk about that, I -- I'd like to go back to the -- the -- just at the end of -- at the end of the war, w-where you were --

A: Yes.

Q: -- a-and -- and -- and what you were doing. I understand you were arrested?

A: I was -- I was only once arrested by Swiss authorities, when my wife and I illegally crossed the border. I was very lucky; I was never arrested by Gestapo. If I would be arrested Gestapo, I would probably not be here. But I was very lucky, and never --

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never really fall into the hands of -- of Gestapo, but when we crossed the border near **Basel**, we were immediately caught by the Swiss border guards, and arrested.

Q: What year was that?

A: This was the end of '44. It was just, you know, the -- the end of '44, and the very beginning of '45. And under pressure from British, we were released by Swiss, and allowed to cross into **France**, which was already liberated. And from **France** by the military plane, we are -- we were taken to **London**.

Q: So when the war ended, you were in **London**?

A: I was in **London**.

Q: And can you tell me what -- what was going through --

A: Well, a-as I told you already, I was -- my job was really, to tell British and Polish about the situation in **Poland**. The history about the **Warsaw** uprising. This was the time before **Yalta**, and before the formation of the puppet su -- Polish government in **Warsaw**. So we -- we were at that time deeply involved in -- in a very desperate struggle to really prevent what happened in **Yalta**. In other words, to s -- to rescue the independence of the country. And that took me my first -- first years in **London**. And I mainly was focusing -- focusing on what was going on in **Poland**. I was a kind of a advisor to the Polish exiled government, which still existed.

Q: And where were you living for the brief period after the war?

A: In **London**.

Q: In **London**, how long did you live in **London**?

A: Until '50 -- until the end of '51. In other words, I spent six years in **London**.

Q: And how would you say your life changed after the war ended?

A: Well, unfortunately, I was in exile. All my plan, my -- really, my -- my objective, I did want to be -- to be a scholar, an economist, and I was just on the point of finishing my doctorate thesis when the war broke out. That was all lost. I had no chance, and no wish even, to return to my scholarly career. Frankly, you know, the objective was how to regain freedom for my country. And that was the main objective and there were only two -- two ways of -- of doing something. One was to try to influence public opinion in the west, a-and the governments in the west. And that was very difficult at that time, because immediately after the war. Still some kind -- the hopes existed that -- that wartime friendly relationship with **Russia** could continue. And second was, to try to influence and educate people in **Poland**. And the -- the only way of doing it was by radio, because in **Poland** there was a monopoly of media in the Communist hands. And the only way people could learn truth, and learn about even their own situation was by listening to foreign radio. So it suited me very well to join **BBC** because I had a chance to broadcast to **Poland**, although the contribution was negligible because the British really did not allow so-called exiles to make any [indecipherable] contribution. Most of the programs were written by British, and our job was simply to translate it into Polish, and to deliver it.

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Q: I could interrupt you for one second, I'm going to readjust this. So for those six years you were working for the **BBC** in **London**, and --

A: You know who I was working for s -- no, I -- for the **BBC** I wor -- I worked fr-from -- since '48 until the end of '51, for three years.

Q: What about the years from '45, the end of w -- the war [indecipherable]

A: I already told you that I worked for the Polish government in exile, I mean, this is the answer, I mean --

Q: Okay. Did -- when was the first time you went back to **Warsaw**?

A: After 45 years, the first time I was in **Warsaw** in a -- a -- at the invitation of **Lech Walesa** on the 10th anniversary of the Solidarity, or **Solidarnosc**. And that was at the time when the first non-Communist government of **Poland** was being formed. So it was -- I was there, yeah, I went to [indecipherable] to see for myself, on 20 -- on 30 of August, '89, after 45 years.

Q: Can you tell me what that was like?

A: Well, i-it was a very moving experience. For 45 years as the director of Radio Free **Europe**, I was on the top of the blacklist as the enemy of Communist. And of course, I could not go back. And I never -- I was convinced that one day **Poland** will be free again, because I sensed that the Soviet system has so many inherent contradictions, that sooner or later these contradictions will bring down the -- the system. But I never hope that it may happen in my life. And it came unexpectedly really, and without bloodshed. And the people were -- felt that Radio Free **Europe** did make a considerable contribution to this bloodless liberation. And so I went privately on the [indecipherable] of, I believe it was **TWA** plane, or a -- or **Pan American** plane, and didn't expect any welcome. I -- I thought some members of my family will be there, but I didn't know that Radio Free **Europe** did broadcast the news of -- that I will be in **Warsaw**, and the time of arrival, the plane. So, after 45 years, the plane -- I touched again the Polish soil, I was very moved, I saw the terminal with the -- this [indecipherable] **Warsaw**. And I saw many people, crowds of people on the terrace and around the building. And I ask myself, why, how's it? I mean, it's Tuesday, a weekday, why they should be there? And they -- when we were going towards the exit, two Americans were behind me and they said, there must be a **VIP** on the **boat**, because a group of people are waiting in front of the plane. That was for me. And the entire leadership of Solidarity was in the front of the plane, I had fantastic welcome, and -- by this hundreds of people who came to the airport. And the next -- I -- the next day, the hostess, my hostess, offered that she will take me to the downtown, to the city. And I said no, because after all, I was born in **Warsaw**, and I would like to be -- to see my city alone. I said, you will have a -- it was in suburb -- you will have a problem to find a taxi, because they don't stop, you have to find the taxi stop. I said, okay, I will manage. I went to the main street, and here was a taxi. So I raised my h -- my hand and su -- the taxi stopped. So I jumped in and the taxi driver said I know who you are, because you were on television, on the evening. Okay, he took me to the place which I requested,

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and the fare was [indecipherable] it was 27 cents, because of the dollar was very high. So I decided, no, I will give him a dollar at least. I gave him a dollar and he said, keep this dollar for yourself. I said, why? How much? He said nothing. Why nothing? Because I was listening to Radio Free **Europe** for so many years, free, wh -- I -- I want to give you -- offer you one free drive. And that was to me very moving, you know, this one dollar was the best reward I got for 25 years of work [indecipherable]

Q: Did you go back to your old neighborhood, or your old home?

A: No, **Warsaw** was destroyed, the house where I lived was rebuilt, but the place where I actually lived, nonex -- was non-existing. Where -- so that, no, I could not find any of my old places.

Q: Did your visit to **Warsaw** bring back memories of -- of the war?

A: Oh yes, definitely, yeah.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about that?

A: Well, you know, this was the city when I spent my childhood. My school, times of my -- my high college, and where I spent my -- the time of -- of my underground activities, until I left for the west, what ak -- what more can I say?

Q: Was it -- were they -- the memories, whether it -- was the feeling the positive, or --

A: Well, the po -- feelings -- th--there was a feeling of tremendous happiness, really, that I can be back in my own city, among my -- my old people.

Q: In 1951 is when you began --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- working for Radio Free **Europe**.

A: Radio Free **Europe**, right.

Q: Where were you?

A: Well, I moved to **Munich**. I got the housing there, and since that, until -- [phone ringing]

Q: I was asking about your move to **Munich**.

A: Yes, well I moved to **Munich**, it was December '51, and took over my job and was organizing my -- the Polish service. I was involved in recur -- recruiting people. Run, dry run, training them, and organizing the program. The inauguration of our program was on May third, May third, '52.

Q: Did your experience in the underground help you in your job as -- as --

A: Oh yes, well it gave me a very good knowledge of the -- of the situation in **Poland**.

Q: And you stayed as director from 1951 --

A: From 1951 until first of January, '76.

Q: During that period is there -- is there any one story or any one thing that you remember that stands out the most?

A: Look, I mean, there were so many stories. I -- I wrote the book in two volumes. I cannot possibly single out one story. There were so many. It was a fascinating life, full of stories, and full of, let's say adventures, different kind that -- during the war. But they were adventures. After all, the -- we had the -- I had several fronts. I worked with the

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American management and had to argue about the policy with the Americans. I had the -- my team, which was very large one. At one moment they were more than 100 people. And finally, the main front was Communism, I had to -- to fight Communism.

Q: How large was your staff?

A: It di -- it started with about 80 people, but later on it was much more -- m-more than -- more than 100.

Q: And can you tell me a little bit about the -- the programming, how many hours a day?

A: Yes, it was the only all time programming. We did start at five in the morning, and we ended after midnight. It was a sort of a continuation of the free Polish radio which did exist before the war. And we even adopted some features of the Polish radio. For instance, the cra -- the -- the program did end with the Polish national anthem. In the middle we had, in the Polish radio at noon, they would transmit the so-called **[indecipherable]**. You know, the very old tune, which was played by trumpeter on the top of the tower of the old gothic church in **Kraków**. We did broadcast this, so in fact it was a kind of a substitute and continuation of the Free Polish Radio. And we had everything, first of all news, every hour on the hour. 10 minutes news so that everybody in **Poland** knew that when, with the strike of an hour, you can turn on **[indecipherable]** and he will hear the recent news. There were, of course, political commentaries, round table discussions, press reviews, all kind of, you know, political future, such as you find in the public radio, public television. But there was -- there were also the program for a -- for a th -- for the country, for the village, for -- for the farmers. And the program for women, program for workers. There was sport, musical programs, everything that you expect from the normal Polish -- normal h-home radio. This was, as I say, a substitute.

Q: Were you yourself on the air?

A: Oh yes, but not -- not regularly. I broadcast when something really very important happened. I did not broadcast every day, or even every month, but when something of great importance happened, then I was on the air. And people knew that it was -- that there was some -- something important in that time.

Q: Can you give me an example of -- of one of those times?

A: Well, for instance, in 1956, there were a big upheaval **[indecipherable]** and the Russians did -- or for instance when the Polish **[indecipherable]** was arrested, which was a big blow against the church, I would go -- go on the air and make my comments about it. When they were anti-com -- anti-Communist party upheavals in October '56, then I would make comments about it. So, whenever there was something very important, I was on the air.

Q: You -- when you went back to **Warsaw**, you understood the impact that you had on those lives.

A: Oh yes, because people were telling me.

Q: How -- how did you know what impact you had on people's lives in **Poland** during the time that you were broadcasting?

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A: Yeah. Well, in the first place, we did meet people who went to the west. Two, the most important indication of effectiveness were attacks -- propaganda attacks by the regime, which were very intense. Attempts to discredit us, discredit me, and **jamming**. I mean **jamming** was a very expensive operation, and the **jamming**, that indicated that they considered our broadcast as effective and dangerous. And finally the Americans did have a contract with the measure audience analysis institutions in **Denmark**, in **Austria**, and they were conducting, you know, public opinion polls among people who were coming from **Poland**. So we had pretty good indications of our effectiveness.

Q: Yeah.

A: And letters, but we didn't attach too much importance to letters.

Q: Were any other -- did you stay in touch with any other members of the underground that you associated with during the war?

A: First of all, there was no underground movement after the war. There was for sometime, and was eliminated by the political police. But I had my friends, and some of them would, in great secret, contact me when they were in the west. So yes, I did -- I was in contact with my old friends and associates.

Q: Are you still today?

A: Oh, by -- by all means. Y -- y -- even more, because it's no longer any risk to anybody.

Q: Y-You talked about how your experiences a -- underground gave you experience to - - to do your job --

A: Yes.

Q: -- at -- as -- at Radio Free **Europe**. Can you -- can you talk a little bit about how you applied some of those experiences?

A: Well, first of all I believed that I had a very good knowledge of people, of mood, of the situation. Therefore, I could build the program in such manner that it is best tune to the mentality, interests, traditions of the Polish audience, something I could not do in **BBC**. In the **BBC**, British were deciding what to broadcast and how. Here we had -- Americans gave us considerable editorial autonomy. They believed that only free Poles know how to broadcast to their compatriots. And therefore I could use my knowledge of the audience to make broadcast as effective as possible.

Q: When did you come to the **United States**?

A: I did come to **United States** in November, '77. I spent almost two years in a sort of a **[indecipherable]** we had a small house in **Austria** in the **Alps**, **[indecipherable]** lonely house, with beautiful views and we spent almost two years there, and I wrote my book co -- called, "**Courier From Warsaw**," which was later published, in underground in **Poland** and here in **United States** in English, then also in **France**, in **Holland**, in -- in **Sweden**. And we spend this two years time, almost, not quite, simply to -- I -- I wrote my -- my wartime memoirs.

Q: And you moved to the **United States** --

A: In November, '77.

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Q: And why did you decided to move to the **United States**?

A: Because I felt that I still was not old enough to retire, that my personal friend, Dr. **Jeziński** was the director of National Security Council, and I did decide that I could serve my old country by being here and by trying to influence American policy towards -- towards **Poland** and my part of the world. This was an ideal place, close to the administration, to the Congress. And with -- as I say, with few influential friends.

Q: **Zbigniew Brzezinski**

A: Was one of them, yes.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But you see, people whom I knew in Radio Free **Europe** when they were very young, in the meantime they had high positions in the American life, so I had a lot of contacts.

Q: What -- what was your position when you came here?

A: I became the consultant to the National Security Council, and I was the consultant al -- until the present administration. In other words, to the end of President **Bush** term. And I became national director of the Polish American Congress, which is an umbrella organization. A spokesman for 10 million of American citizens with their roots in **Poland**.

Q: Can I -- can I ask you about your personal life, meaning your wife, and -- and --

A: Well, we met in the underground. She was a liaison girl, she was very active in the underground. And when I came back from my secret trip to **Sweden**, I brought with me the mail in mi-microfilms. And the liaison girl who came to pick up this film was my future wife. This is where we met. And we were married during the **Warsaw** uprising, with the enemy lines only 100 **years** from the chapel where we married. And since that, we are staying together. It's 52 years.

Q: Have you had children?

A: We have no children.

Q: Did you leave the Polish American congress at -- at the end of the **Bush** administration? Have you no -- no longer --

A: No, because the **Clinton** administration no longer con-continued consultants. There were no consultants. I was **de facto** consultant, and I am still in daily touch wi -- with -- with the -- with the **NSC**, National Security Council. But I was -- I am no longer on the list of consultants.

Q: I wanted to ask you how -- how often you think about the experiences during -- during the war, and in the underground, if -- if there are certain things that trigger your memories, music, or food, or --

A: No, because frankly, I wrote my memoirs, I wrote my two books about my career in the radio, and I hoped that I can put it behind me. Unfortunately, then the -- I had the interviews, and people asking, but I prefer to think about the present time and about the future, rather than about the past. It's not very productive to live in the past.

Q: So you feel as though writing your memoirs helped you move beyond --

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A: I -- I hoped it will be, but the people like yourself come and ask about my past.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: You had said that your time at Radio Free **Europe** was the most important time.

A: It was definitely, by far the most important. Frankly, you know, I never thought that the -- the words, as a vehicle carrying ideas and information may have such a tremendous impact. A-And first of all, frankly we eliminated effectiveness of censorship, because it was enough to **tune** to us to learn everything that the censorship was trying to keep from preventing to know, to learn. So we destroyed the monopoly of media, ne -- monopoly of information and education. As long as this monopoly existed and people were isolated from the outside world, and flow of information, th-they could have been brainwashed. But once they had access to free sources of information, they wou -- they remained independent in their own mind and in drawing their own conclusions. The -- that was our role. Also, we did play a role of opposition and I discovered that the ruling group fights the opposition by doing what the opposition wants them to do. In other words, the **[indecipherable]** when it is widely known, government reacts to the opposition. They don't want people to believe in what they say. And therefore they try to prove that you were wrong by acting exactly like you want them to act. We -- our first rally, probably it was the most important event in the history of political broadcasting. After **Stalin's** death, and after **Beria** was -- was killed, a very high official of the Polish political police, who had -- knew all the secrets -- all the state secrets and party secrets, defected to the west. And after being debriefed by the **CIA**, we could use him and he was broadcasting all the secrets of the party. And th-there were -- the -- the entire **Poland** was listening. And political -- they had to find scapegoats because he was revealing all kind of crimes committed by the leadership. In order to defend themselves, they put all the blame on the political police and they -- it was reorganized completely. And the resulting chaos really -- I mean, decreased the terror. You know, people were no longer afraid because the entire apparatus of the repressions was paralyzed. And it was bef -- because of the effect of **[indecipherable]** that opposition in **Poland** could became much more articulate. They could speak. They could, in a sense, organize themselves. And that was our major contribution.

Q: Mm-hm. I -- I was curious ha -- how you at Radio Free **Europe** dealt with the issue of anti-Semitism.

A: Well, you see, right after the war, I believe that anti-Semitism was pretty dormant, but the regime, which was under great attack from the west, for violating democratic institutions, for forging the election, in a way that they want to -- to compromise the Polish people, and there are strong suspicions that so-called **[indecipherable]** was instigated by the political police in order to, you know, compromise the Polish people, but in fact, th-the sad part of the story is that this kind of provocation is that there was a provocation, did find a fertile ground. There was people who did the -- the d -- the fact, historical fact is that 42 innocent Jews who survived the -- the Holocaust and lost many,

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many of their relatives and friends, were murdered by the Poles in **Kielce**, and this is something that I myself, as a Pole, I am very am -- ashamed of. And I believe that we should and we did -- **Poland** did apologize for it. Then, you know, there was a anti-Semitism made in **Russia. Stalin -- Stalin** was anti-Semi -- was anti-Semitic, and shortly before his death, he ran so-called doctor's plot, accusing his doctors of Jewish background of plotting against his life. And that was a signal for kind of anti-Semitism that was instigated by Russians in order to divert the attention of people from their poverty, from the inefficiency of the Communist regime, and to find a kind of a scapegoat. Jews were to be a scapegoat. And this was the kind of anti-Semitism spread by the Stalinist faction, called [**indecipherable**], in the Communist party. And they were opposed by intellectuals, liberal intellectuals. And among the intellectual [**indecipherable**] there were many Jews. And this is when we first really started to fight against anti-Semitism, '54 - '55, after **Stalin's** sudden death, when this was the means to compromise, liberally minded Jews who were in opposition to the party line, to the party system of work. And there were some very outstanding intellectuals, who were opposing this kind of anti-Semitic trend, and we did a lot to support them to compromise the anti-Semitism as a -- something that is imported from **Russia**. Seeing as the people at that time hated Russians, this was probably the most effective way of fighting anti-Semitism. We did -- dedicated lot of time and work to it.

Q: You had a lot of programming that --

A: A lot. Scripts, they are still in -- in existence, scripts.

Q: I think you had said in -- in the other interview that the -- your time in the underground was the most fascinating time of your life.

A: It was fascinating. Well, in the underground I had adventures. There wer -- this was a time a -- war time adventures. And the -- in Radio Free **Europe**, it was much less romantic. We were simply broadcasting, writing program.

Q: What is your attitude now toward -- toward **Germany**?

A: Well, first of all, I hate hatred. In other words, I am strongly against the idea of eternal enemies. The Germans inflicted terrible, you know, blows to **Poland**. They not only murdered the -- most of the Jewish population, but the -- but about two million Poles were killed in the concentration camps. They were executed, or deported. And the -- the years of German occupation were years o -- of terrible human tragedies. So frankly, you know, of course I had very strong feelings against the Germans. But after the war, when I was in **Germany**, I discovered that you cannot generalize, that there are also some Germans who are decent, and who would like to frankly, compensate in some way f-for what they did to the Poles. I --I -- well, this is probably a postman. Yeah, I -- I can do -- do it later. And ma -- the only problem I had with the Germans is their territorial claims against **Poland**, which were extremely dangerous to our existence because **Poland** was moved westward. We lost one-third of our territory and our people were annexed by -- by the **Soviet Union**. And we were compensated by the big powers in the west. A considerable part of former **Germany** was incorporated into post-war

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Poland. We couldn't possibly lost it again, it would be then a sort of a remnant state. And so this was the main problem between the Poles and the Germans, but in 1990, Germans recognized the border as final. It was ratified by the parliament. And as of that date, it was a turning point. And once the Germans reconciled themselves with the post-war borders, they are no longer a threat and there is a tremendous improvement in the Polish - German relationship, which I'm very happy about, because I -- I believe that hatred is a boomerang. If you hate other people, they will hate you. And so the reconciliation between **Poland** and **Germany**, which is very real, is probably the best achievement of -- of this Solidarity government.

Q: When you see that kind of hatred in -- in **Bosnia** and other places --

A: Oh, terrible.

Q: -- wh-what -- what does it --

A: Well, you know, this is -- you know, the hatred brings about unspeakable human sufferings, loss of life, tortures, everything. Senseless. Senseless. So ethnic hatred, and any kind of ethnic or racial prejudices are extremely dangerous to humanity, and to everybody, including to Poles also. So I am very happy that **Poland**, after it go rid of its -- the Communist and Soviet domination is working towards reconciliation with all its neighbors, with Germans, with Lithuanians, with Ukrainians, Czechs and so on. And restored all the minority ethnic rights to -- to the -- its -- its ethnic minorities.

Q: In -- in the video interview you did, you talked about how angry you were, that it was a crime that the world didn't do more to stop the Holocaust, that it didn't listen.

A: Absolutely. You know, this was my very tragic experience, because frankly, I was again an eyewitness. Of course the Jews were isolated, they were behind the walls. But we could -- I could still see the starving Jews who would escape from ghetto and die on the pavement from -- from starvation. So it was s -- it was a tragedy, human tragedy without any precedent. We did lose two million ethnic Poles, but only Jews were really condemned to death simply because they were born Jews, and had no chance to survive. And I was the -- the first envoy who brought this information about the Holocaust, with my colleague, **Jan Karski**. And then I will -- I followed. I was in **Stockholm** at the time of the uprising in the **Warsaw** ghetto, and I knew about it, and I wrote a memorandum to the Polish government that they should exert their influence on the British that some kind of retaliatory measures should be threatened to stop the extermination of Jews. And I know that the memorandum was passed to **Churchill**, but he was not prepared to any -- to any -- the only thing he -- I believe that my memorandum did contribute to the decision to prosecute after the war wa -- German Nazi war criminals, because soon after the decision was made to install the tri-tribunal, and announcements was made that Nazi criminals will be brought to justice. Then I came back, it was July '44, and the ghetto no longer existed, but there were many Jews in hiding. And I got instructions to pre -- to b -- to prepare myself for my second mission to **London**. And to be briefed, to learn about the whole thing, so that I could again bring about some message, about what's -- what happened to the Jews. So there

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was a man by the name of **Volitski**, who has his, you know, plaque in **Yad Vashem**, he -- he was -- who was the kind of a liaison with the Jewish militant organization. I spent hours with him. He told me all about the -- the uprising and all that. He was himself in touch with it. And I got on microfilms the report of the survivor of the Jewish ghetto uprising, and also photographs, documents, which I brought in my secret **[indecipherable]** as microfilms. And I was the one who brought this report of the Jewish militant organization to **London**. I reached **London** in December '50 -- '43, and th-this report was passed by the Polish government to the British government, to the organization and I was -- I did see many members of the British cabinet, members of the Parliament, intelligence -- people from intelligence community, and I was telling about what happened to the Jews. And, frankly, you know, as far as the British cabinet, there was no response.

Q: Yeah.

A: And when I talked to **Eden, Anthony Eden**, the foreign secretary, he told me, Mr. **Nowak**, the best way and the only way we can help Jews is by winning the war. If we divert our limited war, you know, military resources to such objectives as bombing the tracks, it will delay the end of the war. And you know, when I came back to **London** with my wife, when I was writing my memoirs, and we went to Her Majesty's records office, archives, I found piles of documents concerning my mission, including the reports from **Eden** to **Churchill** about our conversation. Not one word about the Jews. Not one word. I took to all of them, I raised the question of Jews. And I -- I strongly believe that retaliatory measures would have offered at least a moral help. That they would know they are not ignored, that the -- the world is -- sees that trad -- trade -- **tragedy** -- tragedy. So I feel that -- but even Jews would not believe me. I mean, I wa -- there was a Polish Jew by the name of **Schwarzbat**, who was in the Polish, you know, sort of a -- a parliament in exile, and he put me in contact with the American Jewish organization, **Joint** and others. And I spent hours with them, they didn't believe me. When I said that two million -- at least two million Jews were already killed, they thought that this is unacceptable exaggeration, and that I must have some political motives --

Q: Right.

A: -- in telling this story.

Q: Di -- it would seem that your frustration during that period made you more determined in your work later on --

A: Absolutely.

Q: -- to see that changes occurred.

A: Absolutely. I must say that I used this very powerful instrument, Radio Free **Europe**, to fight anti-Semitism. But all -- also we did not generate hatred toward Germans or Russians. We were, you know, defending our national aspirations, but the per -- th-there was no purpose of really generating feelings of hatred, because I strongly believe that hatred is a boomerang that would hit the Polish people back. And I was pa -- at the

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times when you know the -- the -- there was again the outburst of party anti-Semitism. In times of a man who was in charge of political police, poli -- poli -- by the name of **Motcha**, and he was anti-Semitic. And he really unleashed anti-Semitic propaganda. And the [indecipherable] of Jews, there were many Jews in the government, many Jews in the all kind of position, and there were many Jews among the university youth. And he started a campaign of anti-Semitism, like in **Russia**. And by discrimination, by persecution, by threats, he forced these people of Jewish background, who considered themselves Poles, to leave the country. There was a -- an exodus of young Jews who didn't even know they were Jewish. They were completely assimilated with the Polish culture. And there were Polish writers, Polish scholars. And this was again unspeakable tragedy for them. And we were going out of our way to at least offer these people a moral help by condemning it. And I had a lot of satisfaction when, for instance, a Polish essayist and -- and writer by the name of **Roman Cast**, who had to leave the country under this kind of purge, and he became a professor at what it's called, **Brooks -- Stone -- Stonebrook** University. He came to mean and said, Mr. **Nowak**, if not for Radio Free **Europe**, I and my daughter would have committed suicide. And we were on the -- on the verge of doing it. But your broadcast made us believe that we are not alone, we are not isolated. That our -- and -- and the kind of moral comfort that we got by listening to Radio Free **Europe**, really, we decided, no, we will leave the country, we -- but we -- we -- we will live on with all this. And this was for me a tremendous reward. There were my former colleagues, **Jan Kott**, who is a very highly respected American scholar, was my schoolmate. He was of Jewish background. And they were all really highly appreciative of our -- of our efforts. Also, during the **Israel** six -- Six Days War, we were on the air from the morning until night, and the **Israel** embassy got I don't know how many flowers, messages, from our listeners. Because of course, since it was -- since **Russia, Soviet Union** was on the Arab side, Polish people on the -- were on the Jewish side. So I think it was -- I am very proud of -- of this effort, which under my leadership was undertaken by Radio Free **Europe**, in fighting hatred and prejudice.

Q: Do you think the world is capable of experiencing a -- the -- the kind of hatred that -- that the Germans had, and the kind of killings that they carried out during the war?

A: Well, Germans themselves did a lot to weaken this feeling. After all they -- they made the democratic **Germany**, did not deny what they have done -- what -- what was done in the name of Germans, but they were trying to first of all make truth known to every German. And they were trying to make good for what -- these are things -- nobody can restore life to six million people. But they have done a lot to recon -- for reconciliation with the -- with the Jews in **Israel** and in the [indecipherable].

Q: But do you think that the world is capable of -- of -- you know, s -- you talked about your frustrations in -- in -- in -- inaction --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- for the rest of the world seem -- seemingly didn't do enough --

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A: Yeah.

Q: -- during the war. Do you think that could happen again? Do you think that the world could stand by?

A: Well, you look at **Bush** now. I mean, this was ethnic cleaning, which may be an o -- perhaps was not a systematic murder in the factories of death, but nevertheless, people were being killed simply because they happened to be born Muslims. Or -- or Serbs, but mostly [**indecipherable**]. This is again the same tragedy. The world should really encourage by every possible means, exchanges of people, personal contacts, reconciliation. And I am very happy the Polish gover -- government, after the fall of governments, are doing their best to seek reconciliation with their neighbors, not only with Germans, but also with pole -- with Lithuanians, for instance. So that before the war, **Poland** was at -- at the war with all its neighbors, no longer so. And I am very happy about it.

Q: I wanted to ask you about one thing you said, that you thought your report to -- to **Churchill** I believe it was --

A: Yes.

Q: -- helped with the investigation of --

A: Yes.

Q: -- Nazi war criminals. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

A: Well, that was not a matter of investigation, because Germans were still occupying power. But against warning Germans about some kind of retaliatory action, that if you don't stop this systematic mass murder of Jews, you will be puni -- punished. And I said, you bombed **Germany** anyhow, why not to say these are our retaliatory measures for what you are doing, for instance, to Jews. And that was not -- not accepted, this kind of **SOS**.

Q: I wanted to ask you about, you have these pictures around your living room of -- of - - o-of you meeting with, I think every president from --

A: **Carter**.

Q: -- **Jimmy Carter**, and also the Pope --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and **Lech Walesa**. Can you tell me about those experiences, what it --

A: Well, I really -- as you said, I worked with all of them, and with their stuff. And I must say that all of them did play a very constructive role in restoring democracy in east central **Europe** and in **Poland**. **U.S.** policy since the end of 70's, is a story of success. And -- and I am non-partisan and I believe that both democratic administrations of **Carter**, and now **Clinton**, and of **Reagan** and **Bush**, contributed greatly to rebirth of democracy, and regaining sovereignty by these countries. And so to each of them we owe some debt of gratitude. I must say that since the time of **Woodrow Wilson**, no other president did more to **Poland** than **George Bush**. And this is not my partisan view. It's simply that he was -- got deeply involved in support for **Walesa**, support for Solidarity, and then he made possible take off, successful take off of the free market

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economy, by offering considerable assistance, economical assistance, by reducing debts. So, I must say that I consider **Bush**, on the Polish sector as the president who did a lot to combat the Communists for the overthrow of government, and for installation of democracy. Democracy and a free market economy.

Q: Do you remember anything significant that -- anything stand out from what these men told you?

A: I would have to -- to think about it. There were some stories, the problem is to remember them.

End of Tape One, Side B

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Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: Can you tell me about the Presidential Medal of Freedom that you received recently?

A: Well, ni -- I wa -- it was a very unexpected honor, which I never s -- either sought or expected. But of course, once if -- I got it, I am very happy about this. It's a recognition of many years of work and struggle for the common values, because since the beginning of the Cold War, **United States** goals and objectives were identical with our asp -- Polish aspirations. We did want to regain freedom, sovereignty and democracy. And you na -- it was in the interests of **United States**, and **United States** spent a lot of money, a lot of efforts to support our aspirations. So whatever I have done for my country of birth, I have also done for my adopted country. And th -- I am happy that my contribution was recognized by the president.

Q: Would you mind reading that?

A: Well, you -- you should read -- please do read it. I don't want to read it because I don't want to advertise myself. If you want to read it, okay, I'm not going to do it.

Q: Wi -- it -- the award mentions your -- your work in the underground as well as your -
-

A: Yes.

Q: -- work for Radio Free **Europe**.

A: Yes. Well, I guess that even by bringing, you know, secret reports of our intelligence, I did make some -- some contribution to the w-wartime effort. They were important reports, I am told, although I would never know the content of it. It were -- they were hidden in these small objects, and th-they are -- they were a key, **[indecipherable]**, shaving utensils, and I never really read them, but I was told they were important. The British gave me the King's medal for courage -- King's Medal of Courage, which was very rare decorations, reserved to the foreigners who contributed to the British war effort. And this is the highest civilian distinction that **United States** is offering and I am proud of it, I am very happy about. I did -- this -- the decorations were never my objectives. I did not work to get honors and positions and all that. But when I get them, I am very happy.

Q: What -- i-it -- I keep thinking of how your -- your work in -- in the underground was never your objective. I mean, you were reacting to circumstances, and what happened then led you to the path that you --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- you took, and had it not been for your experiences in the underground, you probably never would have --

A: True.

Q: -- gone in the direction.

A: Absolutely. I think it was a kind of interlude. Bi -- I would never get into **BBC** without my wartime record. And then my wartime record brought the attention of Americans to my person. So, I was -- became pretty well known, and I -- I believe yes, the radio career was a kind of a continuation of my wartime activities.

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Q: Can you tell me what you're working on now [indecipherable]

A: Well, I -- I am still, informally speaking, an consultant. I was until recently national director of the Polish American Congress. I was national director for 18 years, and I resigned last July, and -- in protest, frankly, because I didn't like some kind of a statement of the president of the Polish American Congress, which in my view had an anti-Semitic undertones. It was in connection with the **K-Kielce** pogrom.

Q: What was the statement?

A: The statement was that **Poland** should not apologize for the pogrom, and I violently disagree on that. I think if you made a sin, the only way is to admit, and to say I am sorry. So I, frankly, you know, believe that I have to be faithful to my values, and I resigned. But I am still very active as a sort of informal consultant, almost in daily touch with the **NSC**, with the State department, with the agencies that deal with **Poland**, and with the members of the congress. It's a kind of lobbying. On a -- in addition, I write a lot. I have a fortnight -- 10 minutes talks on the Polish radio in **Warsaw**. I record them every fortnight. And I -- I publish a lot in the -- in the Polish media, in spite of my late age, in spite of my age.

Q: Have you been --

A: I am -- I am pretty busy, I must tell you.

Q: Yes. It's -- it's apparent. Have you been to the Holocaust Museum?

A: Many times. I was immensely impressed. I think Holocaust Museum is fantastic success, and it -- first I was really looking at -- at the exhibits. But when I went for the third time I was not looking at the exhibits, I was looking at the public. And I was impressed by the fact that there were crowds of young Americans. There were teenagers. And I watched -- watched how impressed they were. And you know, they -- when they were coming, they were laughing, they were you know, talking, whispering, everything. When they came to see one of these exhibits, shoes, total silence. They were so impressed, they stopped talking. And then I overheard one girl telling other, look, each shoe is a human being. So I think that educational importance of the museum is fantastic, and -- and became a landmark of **Washington**, I -- I can -- anybody that comes from **Poland** wants to go to see the museum. And -- and I think it's a great success, the museum is a great success, and it -- I hope it will have a considerable educational impact on public.

Q: Right. It was really such a short time ago, I mean it's --

A: Exactly. But it's extremely well planned. I mean, people who were building the museum had the imagination, sort of a strategic way of thinking, and it is so well done, thought out, that it is really one of the most interesting things that you can see in -- in -- in the capital of -- of **United States**.

Q: Do you -- have you had any contact with -- with survivors of the Holocaust [indecipherable]

A: Oh yes. They -- I do meet them, and have very friendly. **Mice Lederman** is my personal friend. We are -- we are very close to each other. He is a survivor. His wife is -

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- is -- is -- was in **Auschwitz**. As a matter of fact, I was with Mrs. **Lederman** in **Auschwitz**, and she has said, this barrack, this is the barrack when I and my two sisters were living. So I -- I do know many, many survivors and we are on very good terms. As a matter of fact, as a eyewitness of the Holocaust, I was many times invited by Jewish survivors to tell about my story, to tell what I saw, particularly o -- by -- by the children of survivors. There were huge meetings. I was in **Chicago**, long time ago, in **Skokie**. I don't know, there were probably 3,000 people there. Then I was invited to **Los Angeles** by **Simon Wiesenthal** Institute and they offered me a kind of a diploma that I am on their roll of honor. And I was telling them the story. And then I was invited to -- to **Ottawa -- Ottawa in Canada**. Again, big gathering of survivors. And I -- I always have a standing ovation. And I asked, look people, I am not telling you anything new. After all, y-y-you -- if you didn't go through it yourself, then your parents who survived, told you all about it. Why are you so very interested in? And they said, because we sense compassion in the way you tell the story. And we still believe that the world is still indifferent. And when we saw the man who is emotionally involved in this, it gives us some kind of a good feeling.

Q: Hm.

A: I will have to finish very soon, you know.

Q: I'm -- I'm just --

A: Quarter to two.

Q: I'm just about finished myself.

A: Yeah.

Q: I -- I'm wondering what kind of affect the -- the war experience had on your faith, and on -- on your spiritual outlook.

A: Yes, well I am a -- a Catholic, and I am a believer, and I think that the war was just a chain of miracles. I mean, how I survived? I was trying to count how many times I was one inch from death, and I couldn't count it, there were so many of the situation and I always felt that some invisible hand is really carrying me through all these dangers. It's -- it's -- the -- the fact that I was never arrested is a miracle in itself. But also you need the -- after the war in '62, I believe, the governors who had the plan to kidnap me when I was in **Helsinki**, to watch the festi -- you -- youth festival, sponsored by Communists. And I believed that the g -- the g -- American intelligence intercepted some messages, and I was just left -- I was warned, go back immediately to **Munich**, take the next plane. And I did, and there are many indications that they were, in fact, trying to, you know, lure me into a boat, boy scout's boat, which -- boy scouts came there and they were trying to invite me to visit their boat, and of course, I would never go there, I mean I realized this is dangerous. So I was miraculously saved many times. And I -- I am a believer, and I -- I -- I -- I am a Catholic, and -- and I will be to the end of my life.

Q: The story that stands out in my mind is -- is when you were helping the young Jewish girl --

A: Yeah.

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Q: -- through some sort of checkpoint.

A: That's right.

Q: And you were so close to being found out.

A: Well, this was again a miracle, you know? The je -- the girl was -- had a s -- Semitic features, you know? I was crossing the border very often, illegally, with the forged documents, but it was not written on my forehead that I am a member of the underground. Here was a girl who was obviously Jewish, and they were not allowed to go outside the ghetto, and to use public transport. And they we -- she would have been executed instantly. But I would be with her, this -- with the same -- same pistol. And never in my life I was so afraid at that -- this moment. My -- my -- my knees were trembling when it was all over. But I was -- frankly, I was happy I have done it.

Q: I was going to ask you if there was anything that you would have done differently.

A: You know, I remember one thing that my mother could never forgive herself and my brother and I. There were two Jewish children, and probably she was no more than nine or 10, and her brother was maybe four. And it was before the ghetto was sealed, and they were going from house to house, asking for food. So they were immediately, my wife -- my mother immediately invited them inside, gave them bread, soup, everything. And she said, well maybe you -- maybe you would like to stay tha -- and she said no, because the parents are in ghetto. We have to go back. And what happened, these probably poor children were later, you know, killed, and we always felt we should have persuaded them to stay. And my wi -- my mother would never forgive herself, that she didn't use -- tell them don't go back, because sooner or later you will be destroyed. Stay with us, we will put you in -- in hiding, we will change the color of your hair and all that. And we [indecipherable] to the end of her life -- she died 95, she said, why did we not really persuade these children to stay? Yeah, and this -- this was the story that I remember.

Q: Mm.

A: Yeah. But they -- they were not -- she was -- said no [indecipherable] Mommy is in the ghetto, y -- and Daddy's in the ghetto. They send us for food, but they expect us back.

Q: Do you ever have dreams about the war?

A: No, I -- no, I really don't di - have any dreams, and I try not to live in the past, because it's -- it's useless. I wrote down whatever I had to, I am telling you the story willingly, but I wo -- I prefer to think about the present day today, and tomorrow. It's much more productive.

Q: I've asked all the questions that I have, if --

A: Okay.

Q: -- anything else you'd like to -- to say that we didn't talk about?

A: Well, I think -- as I say, the Radio Free **Europe**, I had three chapters in my life. The first was underground, the second was radio, the third is now. And I believe of all three, radio was the most productive, because we did support effectively, evolutionary, non-

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violent change. And we are told by the people in **Poland** that without this instrument of supporting evolutionary changes, bloodless changes, there would be no -- no end of Communism. And so many people wrote me about it, told -- **Walesa** was the one who said, with a -- if you -- not for you, we stay symbolic because not my work, it's the w -- collective work of all my friend, I would not be there.

Q: He told you that?

A: Yes, and so did **Garamic [indecipherable]**. I was invited to speak before the Parliament and **Garamic** said, here is the man, without this man we would not be here, which is exaggeration, at least in this sense, that I was part of a collective effort. And all the, you know, attention is focused on me, but I only personalize the effort of many people who worked together, and with the same kind of dedication.

Q: All right.

A: Okay.

Q: Thank you for talking with us.

A: Thank you.

End of Tape Two, Side A
Conclusion of Interview