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# An Interview with Marian Wojciechowski

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

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The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
University Libraries  
University of Nevada Las Vegas



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## Preface

The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of Dr. Harold Boyer. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank the university for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project.

Claytee D. White, Project Director  
Director, Oral History Research Center  
University Libraries  
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## Preface

At age 95, Marian Wojciechowski recalls his personal story of being born a region called called Poland in 1914, just as World War I was beginning. This narrative gives special attention to his Polish background at a time when the country did not technically exist, and their language was forbidden.

By the late 1930s and the dawning of World War II, Marian is a young man struggling to understand what is transpiring, but knowing that he must participate in the Polish underground resistance against the Germans

His activism gets him arrested and sentenced to Auschwitz as a non-Jew and without penalty of death. He recalls the Gestapo beatings which have left him without feeling in his fingers and a loss of hearing.

He shares historical perspectives of the war era, agricultural coops, goal of Germans to sell Jews to the United States and other countries, and a story about a woman who helped save 2500 Jewish children during war.



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ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project



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Name of Interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

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Marian Wojciechowski 6-16-09  
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 6/16/2009  
Signature of Interviewer Date



**Good morning. This is Claytee White. It is June 16th, 2009. We're in the reading room in Lied Library at UNLV.**

**So how are you this morning?**

Thank you very much. Just fine.

**Good. And would you please give me your full name.**

My name is Marian Wojciechowski. Now, there are parts of my life where I was using other names, especially during the war. For instance, I didn't want to, you know, use my real name so my family would not be eventually persecuted. So then I used at that time other name, which later on again legally I corrected that to Wojciechowski again.

**Would you spell your last name for me?**

Yes. W-O-J-C-I-E-C-H-O-W-S-K-I, Wojciechowski.

**Wojciechowski. It's close.**

Yes, close.

**But I'm going to call you Marian.**

Yes. Yes.

**Okay. Very good. I know that you're 95. So tell me a little about your early childhood, where you were born, what that place was like.**

I was born in Poland in the area, so-called historical area of Poland, it's Polaneic. It was known at that time because in at 18th Century over in there in Polaneic was one of the Polish-American heroes. He was later on in Poland to fight, you know, with the Russians at that time because they thought that the Russians were the worst enemies of Poland. And they divided Poland between Russia, Austria and Prussia. So actually over 123 years Poland was not on the map of Europe as a country. Yes. It was divided completely, you know.

I was born in 1914. So at that time, you know, the First World War started. Yes, 1914. But before that... my older brothers, sisters, were not allowed to speak in school in Polish, just in Russian or in German. That means Prussia and Austria—they spoke only in German and in Russia we spoke in Russian...Austria was more, I would say, willing to give more freedom to the people to learn foreign languages and so on. However, in Russia it was not allowed.

So then if, for instance, they caught someone, then they took them either to Siberia in



Russia or they took them to the area where there were no Poles to speak Polish to. So in Russia I would say people transferred from one part of the country to the other parts. For instance, right now there are some in Austria, some still Polish names. And the people that are descendants from those, they were at that time before 1914, you know, they can four different things. They would say, okay, you should not do that. And they did that not only with the Poles. They did that also with Turks. They did that also with Germans. So they were taken in Russia and put them far away so that they will not be connected.

But anyway, in '14 -- the war started in '18 -- Poland was started to be an independent country. So at that time, I was not yet born. But my older sister, for instance, told me that for her to have the books in Polish to learn Polish -- she was under the Russian part taken of the country. So at that time to get the books they had to swim in their kayaks, in small boats to the Vistula -- Vistula, or the river, the main river of Poland, Vistula. On the other side, on the Austrian side to get the books back. But if these books will be found in our house, then my father would be taken, you know, at that time either to Siberia...or somewhere in Austria.

So then it was up to grade school. The grade school. But Russians they say the more stupid the people are the easier it is to run them, you see. So what that means -- they did not allow to learn any other languages except Russian. So that's at that time they brought the books in. The older sister, for instance, and the younger one, they learn Polish from the Polish book at that time.

Now, at that time after 1918, then it was okay because it was independent in Poland. So independence itself, it is -- they started fighting. Part of the Polish were fighting, you know, on the German side. That means Prussia and Austria. They were fighting against Russia in First World War. So what it was at that time that, you know, the brothers were sometimes fighting against (each other); Poles against Poles. The only thing is these Poles were from this part of Poland and these Poles were from the other part of Poland.

So it was really, really -- but even from United States at that time that were here, the people, mostly those that came later to United States, then they went to our Polish Army here. The Polish Army was at that time built and they were all made around here. Pittsburgh where most Polish people were. But at that time they wanted to go to Europe, to Poland, and fight for Poland. And there was, I would say, a place where—Niagara Falls and Buffalo, in the area over



there—they make the camp to fight. From over there they went to France and they were fighting Germans in France. And then from France they went to Poland and they were fighting in Poland against Russians, against Germans and Prussians.

**Who trained them, the ones who were in the Niagara Falls area? How were they trained?**

They were trained over there. There was the camp over there to train the people. Before they were sent to France, they were starting training here.

**They were trained by the United States or by --**

They were trained partially I would say by United States, but mostly by the people that were -- I would say they had to escape from those parts of the country over there because they came to United States. That's why they were -- you know, they had their own also people trained in Russia, for instance, and they were training here.

So what that means: at that time the army, Polish Army, they spoke three languages actually. Some of them spoke, you know, officers and high officers, (spoke) Russian because they went to Russia, to the army to have the job, to do something. Then the other ones were speaking mostly German because they were born over there. And since it was not allowed to speak Polish, they spoke German. And they spoke German only with people -- yes, the German...So it was very difficult at that time --

**Yes. To talk to each other.**

Yes. To understand each other, yes. But still (General Holler) was actually from, you know, over there, sent with this unit later on by United States and Canada. They were sent to France. They were fighting in France. And then from France they went to Poland. The same it was with the weapon. They had, for instance, Karabiners that, you know, weapon, which was sometimes different weapon in Germany, different in Russia, different in Germany, different in Austria. And then, you know, to see that one fits the other, it was a problem. Yes. So they started at that time buying the weapon.

But what it is again, you know, because communism started and so on. They already said...they wanted to bring from France their weapons to Poland to fight I would say for Poland. However, what it was that some of the neighbor countries did not allow (them) to go through their country because they didn't want to be against Russia or against Austria. So this way, you know,



was really problem.

But anyway, at that time (Persuski) -- they were again -- people, they were I would say in charge. They were civil, hourly people or there were military people, you see. So they didn't have enough. For instance, some of them spoke for Russia and wanted to go with Russia against Austria and Prussia. Now, some, those belong over there to Prussia and Austria, they wanted to fight the other ones, you know. But (Persuski), he was in the underground. They called that PPS. That is Polish social part of the system like socialistic, you know, not communist, but socialistic. So socialist state. He was in Russia. He was taken over there to Russia. And he escape from Russia through Japan, you know, all around, and came to Poland again, you know, to fight. Yeha. But he says, okay, to fight. He thought that the worse is Russia. So he was with the Germans and with the Austrians fighting Russians then. For instance, (Demoski), who was in Russia and was I would say speaking for Russia, he wanted to have Poland fight but not Russia. But he wanted to fight Germans.

So, again, you know -- so then they wanted to have (Persuski) -- the Germans wanted to have (Persuski) to swear that they will be truthful and fighting only for Prussia and Austria. Then (Persuski) didn't want. He says, you know, I am not swearing that I will fight them only because I am for Poland. So at that time he was -- (Persuski) with the help of this I would say socialistic help, he was trying to fight. So at that time they arrested (Persuski) because he didn't want to swear allegiance to Austria. And they put him in Germany in (Bagdabood). He was I would say (Koslo) over there. He was there up to '18. Germany, you know, abdicated in the First World War. Then they released (Persuski). He came to Warsaw. And since he was in charge of the army, he was at the same time in charge of all armies from Russia, from Austria and from that, and he was in charge of Poland. And they spoke on this subject. And they say, okay, he was socialistic. But he was socialist as long as Poland was in I would say not independent. At that time I think Poland started to be independent he says he was socialist up to I would say stopped to be socialistic at the time they say in the history stop history on Poland independent.

**Now, tell me what it was like for you growing up. What are your earliest memories, 1918-1919?**

At that time I was, my parents were, I would say, at that time it was no much work over there and



they were in this small town at that time, (Pewaunyitz). In the beginning it was, oh, a few hundred people. Later on was up to a thousand people. Later on after maximum 3,000 people.

**So what did your parents do for a living?**

They were cultivating the grounds. So farmers, like farmers. The only thing is my father tried to do many other things. For instance, oh, he tried to, let's say, to have the horses. And the horses -- took the little ones to grow up. And then he trained them as horses to -- English, for instance, race and took them. Later on after they grew up and they were, for instance, one, two years old, then sold them. And they were purchased at that time by I would say landowners to have the nice horses for they own. So then, for instance, the priests were buying, you know, because priests also drove the horses to go to the other church or to the sick people. So they wanted to have the good horses. So that was one thing.

Besides that, for instance, they have like geese and have 50 geese or a hundred geese or so. And they at that time in the fall they were selling them. And the same with selling eggs, selling (dod). So this way that was not only living only from the farm, but farm was one of that. But we had the horses. We had cows. We had over there. So it was good.

**Did you learn to ride horses? Could you ride horses as a little boy?**

My father, you know, was -- now, I was not buying horses later on. You see, I finished grade school over there. And then it was to go to the high school. High school was like here we would say -- high school here the same. The only thing it was so that the closest one was about, let's say, 15, 20 kilometers from my place where I was born. Now, but at that time to go this 20 kilometers or 15 kilometers somewhere, it was to go to drive the horses. But drive the horses, the roads were very poor. So sand in the summertime. And in the fall after rain it was very often -- how you call?

*Clay or muddy. Washed out.*

Yes, clay. So driving through the clay or through the sand, you know. So this 20 kilometers, it took, let's say, four or five hours at that time because the roads were not good. And my father went to send me to school, high school at that time. And for that first year he sold some -- I don't remember -- picks or something like that and paid for tuition and, of course, oh, every two weeks, every three weeks or four weeks brought to me food.



**So you lived where the high school was located?**

Yes. I used to live with -- it was a special lady who had, you know, three, four, five students like me. And, you know, she cooked for us and she ate from that herself. So I was in that. But later on came the Great Depression.

**Now, did your sisters go to school also?**

My older brother. Sisters were already married. And my older brother, he was in the school also. But he didn't finish the school because it came -- how you call it? -- the Depression and there was no money enough to pay for that. Everything what they had to sell was very cheap. And if they wanted to buy commercial stuff, something like -- whatever, you know, where they needed in the farm, it was very expensive. So this way my brother stopped and he went to work for the community. That means like a secretary, not the main secretary. But he was assistant secretary, my brother then at that time.

Then me and my younger brother, he went also to I would say school, to grade school -- not grade school, but high school with me together one year lower, you know. And he studied good and music play and so. At the time it was so that the school was -- the whole high school was transferred from one city to the other because they build new building, new building for high school but in the other city. So they went over there. And so I went over there. And at that time I transferred to the other city over there for high school. My brother says I don't want to go to high school over there; I want to be a priest. And he had studied and he was the priest and he was -- spoke foreign languages and he had, of course, doctorate, Ph.D. degree in divine or church and also philosophy. At that time after the war, he came to United States. And he was here in United States, oh, first in Canada and then in United States, here in Toledo over there. Then he went to Middle America and South America.

**When did he leave? When did he first come here?**

1963 he came here. And at that time after being six months here he spoke already in church in English.

**Wonderful. Now, I want you to go back again. When you finished high school --**

Yes, I finish high school. Then I say, okay, what to do later on? In the high school I could finish because what I did -- I didn't have other -- my father could not help me anymore. So what I did I



tutored. I was teaching the students that were maybe not smart enough, but the parents had money to pay for high school and for me.

**And this is back in your hometown?**

No. That was already in the high school.

**Okay. So in the same city as the high school.**

That was in the same city, Yes, high school. First I started over there. It was so-called (Stopgeetsa). That was the place where I was in the high school. Then later on the high school was transferred to (Bushcosstrewy). (Bushcosstrewy) was the resort place, you know.

*Resort.*

**Resort, uh-huh. So now, is that the place where you became a tutor?**

No. I finish over there high school. The first year we move over there I finish high school. Then I say okay to go later on. So my friends say, okay, go to Warsaw and go to the school. The school was Warsaw School of Economics, a university and I went over there. At that time I also worked first as a tutor for about six months or so. And then they needed, you know, help later on in this --

*Cooperative.*

-- coop movement. They needed the coop movement, new people to train them and to have them later on start working and developing coop movement.

**Is that to do with farming? Coop movement had to do with farming?**

Coop movement was all part. There was separate coop movement. There was loans. And then there was separate coop movement for eggs and butter. And there was separate coop movement for farmers and so on.

At that time I got the job over there as the assistant secretary again over there in coop movement. I had very, very good, you know, I would say the boss, man who was in charge of that for me, my boss. So he was very good. And he says, okay, here's the key to the building. Here's the key to the office. Then he says I will give you job to do and you do the job within your week. He gave me such I always had the job, but I could not keep that longer than a week. And so at that time I was -- he says, well, you will be working in the daytime we are here, fine. If you are in the university, you know, during the -- we didn't have all the equipment that you have now today. At that time it was very, you know, I would say simple. So at that time if you want to work, come



here tonight, working in the night, please you can do that. If you want to work Saturday or Sunday. So I was full-time student and full-time worker at that time. And so usually I spent very short time on any type of, let's say, vacation or so. Work, work, work, you know. But I got my master's degree in three years.

**Wonderful.**

And studying over there I took, as I said, two things. First was this one to learn, you know, how to be --

*Oh, the cooperative.*

Cooperative, how to cooperative. And second thing I was in the school. So this way it usually was this way that I was getting in the morning for eight o'clock I was going to the university. That was called not university, but was Warsaw School of Economics. So I went over there. And I was over there up to -- I was busy normally after 12 o'clock, two o'clock or so. Then after that I went to work over there where I was, you know, and then did my part of the job. Then work over there until about four o'clock, five o'clock. Then I went to the university, went back to the library because the library was open up to ten o'clock in the evening. So I was after the ten o'clock in the evening over there. Then ten o'clock I went back out and I was living at that time in so-called academic --

*Like a dormitory.*

There were I believe seven floors or so. It was the place where we used to live (as) students. So I was over there. And I got 50 percent I would say free and 50 percent I had to pay. So from this money I was making at that time in work, I had to have enough to pay for school. I have enough to pay for my lodging and for eating and for clothing and for everything, you know. That was education also. So I studied. After ten o'clock I came to the place where I lived and then to my room. And to have enough money pay for, two of us were living together.

**Right. You shared the room.**

We were sharing room. So at that time I went home. Then he still studied, my friend. He was studying. So I went to sleep. I slept as long as he was studying. Then at the time he was going to sleep, so he wake me and I got up. And I studied up to the morning up to about six, seven o'clock and again. So it was hard. But as I say I made master degree and bachelor's degree. Master's



degree was in working on that and bachelor's degree in education. And then after I got the degrees, it was --

**Which year did you get your master's?**

Beg your pardon?

**Which year?**

That was 1937. And then I was already 23 years old at that time I finished my studies. And so I had I would say postponed my going to—in Poland it was that everyone had to go to the military service. So I postponed that until I finish my studies. I could not postpone anymore because I was 23 and that was not longer. And so I was at that time what I want to do. I was tired. And so I says what to go to the military service to rest in the service. Yes. And to rest because I was so tired. So I went at that time to say, okay, I go in army it was. It was the flying.

**Air force.**

Air force. It was the question of (pancer) division. That means the tanks and all that stuff. And also it was also the -- all stuff, you know. It was also horses, riding on horses. So I say I will go to military service to have to do with the horses. That means horses where we didn't have enough I would say tanks, cars or so. So we had the horses. The horses would just drive people from one place to the other. It was pretty good. And so I went over there in September and I was for one year. Then nine months was just training, military training, officer's school, and three months later I'm practicing that in the other units, you know, to practice in that as candidate for officer or officer already at that time.

So after one year in the military service, I came back to work as the inspector. First I was I would say learning the farms, farmers' inspections and how to send, for instance, the corn or wheat or so, how to clean that, how to sell and so on. And we send that to (Gadansk) at that time to (Abrontens). And that was three months. And after three months they took me and started teaching me again. The same gentleman who was before teaching me how to work as the assistant secretary, the same gentleman he was right now teaching me how to be inspector. Yes. And very fine person he was. And that was for one year working.

**So you worked 1938 to 1939?**

'37-38 I was in the military service. And I started in '39 to work as the inspector. And then at that



time I started before the war started. That was that I was at that time, let's say, 25 years old. And the next one with the age, younger age, asked me was there a next one, gentleman who was over there working already for maybe 15 years or so and he was 50. Now, and I learn very good, so good that wherever I went, you know, they wanted rather to have me as the inspector come than him because I was more, I would say, working with them, more easy working with them. I didn't want to take, let's say, pride that I did something or I taught them something or so I told them that or that or that. I says during my inspection they improved that and that and that, but I didn't put anything on me. I put the credit on them. So they liked that very much.

And then World War started. I was called to army and I went to the army. I went to east where I used to work before to my unit. And then they sent the whole regiment -- they sent three regiments as the army. They sent also with some other part of people and, let's say, where we were sent, you know, and cannons and so and small tanks and so. And we were taken again west. About, oh, let's say a week or two weeks before the war started, we were already on the borderline between Germany and Poland.

**They expected the invasion?**

Yes. They started at the first of September. Germany started. Yes. But we didn't know. And, of course, Germany had better things, more air force, were prepared already for the war. And what it was, it was some kind of treason on Poland from England and France. England and France before the war, they made the agreement that if Germany would -- or whoever would attack Poland, they will attack them. But as the time came Germany was ready. They were not ready. And they didn't want us to prepare. So they say if you will, I would say, start preparation for the war -- that means just organizing for the war -- he says then what we do, he says, we will nullify the agreements.

*That they would come help Poland.*

And they didn't allow us to prepare for that. So Germany attack Poland. And at that time they didn't do anything, anything.

**Okay. Because Germany had been preparing ever since the end of World War I.**

Yes. Hitler came to power and was already three years preparing.

**So now, France and England weren't prepared either.**



They didn't want us to prepare.

**But were they prepared?**

No, they were not prepared either. But they thought that they will give Poland that S check (indiscernible) as it was with (Balkans) that all that Hitler took that over. And they were not ready to fight at all. So at that time we were told go. That means go east because Stalin did not attack Poland yet until 17.

*September 17th.*

Until September 17 Stalin attack Poland. So the people during that time from 1st to 17, they were going east to reorganize. They say we will be reorganized and go. And then on 17 Stalin attacked Poland from the east.

**And Germany had already attacked from the west.**

Yes, from the west. And 17 days later Stalin attack from the east and then also from north and south because they took Czechoslovakia. So, again, that was -- so Poland was all around.

**Why was Poland so important to so many people?**

You see what it was, Poland was I would put -- my thinking is this way. That was 30 May '91. You know, at the time Poland prepared after United States had already Constitution and United States was free country at that time. At that time from United States was -- (Cashusko) find Pulaski was killed. He was the head of the American Calvary, Pulaski, Poland.

**So are you talking about the Revolutionary War now?**

Yes, Revolutionary War here. So then the next similar revolution was in Poland at that time. And the revolution, they wanted to give the rights to all people, all people are equal. So, you see, they wanted to take that in Poland. But Russia and Prussia and Austria, they were afraid that if this revolution will be in Poland and if, for instance, Poland will have the freedom as United States has, then they, I would say, will be -- they themselves will be in trouble.

**Because Poland would become too strong.**

So that Poland may be too strong. And what more, you see, they -- (Habsworth) and all those, they actually reigned the country, their countries. And, you know, slaves were still over there. Poland wanted to make the slaves free. So that's why (Cashusko) being here, you know, in United States, he wanted to fight over there. But he did not have enough arms and people and so on. So



that's why they were afraid of that. And they wanted to, I would say, not to allow Poland to be independent because being free they would make free all the people.

**Right. So they would bring democracy and freedom.**

Democracy, Yes.

**So in 1939 you joined the military again. You had to go back into the military.**

Yes.

**What was that like?**

Now, you see, that was like hell. It was like hell. We waited until it started to be 1st of September. It was that night and changing today to --

*Dawn.*

Yes. The sun didn't come out yet. And at that time like we were here -- myself, we were on that such hill. We were on the hill over there. And my, I would say, friends and so on, we were here.

Now, German tanks started to --

**To surround you.**

-- cross us. And German still part at that time was taking -- still was German. And so they were there. And what it was they had the tanks and cannons, which were going to us and far behind us. And our weapon what we had didn't go to them.

**Didn't even reach them.**

So we could not much make -- you know. So they started shelling at us. So now, it was about -- they say about two-thirds of the soldiers were killed or heavy wounded. But this one-third was still there. Then the Germans were going to us and trying to take us. And they didn't know that going over there they had to go under the -- it was some kind like, oh, hills between the hills.

**So you were on a hill. Did they have to come through the valley?**

Right. In the valley. And so they went into the valley. And they didn't know that they are getting into the valley. And we had over there the cannon and their train. If they got into the valley, then we started -- they figure somewhere between 150 and 160 tanks and cars for soldiers. And they got destroyed by Poland. So our regiment then at that time, our regatta.

*Brigade.*

We destroy about 150, 160. And we kept that. Then Hitler say what it is? Why you don't go up,



because, he says, we lost all the German, lost so many tanks, so many cars and so on? So he gave again. And again it was destroyed. So at that time it was one of the biggest. But in order not to be encircled we had to also withdraw.

**So you had to withdraw.**

Withdraw. So we withdrew. And all the time we were withdrawing up to almost Warsaw. Now, at that time I was fighting and my assistant was killed. I was crying at that time as a child because I knew him maybe two weeks, three weeks. But he was very, I would say, devoted, very good during that time. And he was my assistant. And he was on one wing. I was on the other wing. And he got over there killed. So after that I even could not go over there to, let's say, put him in grave because we were withdrawing. But I was sure that he will be, I would say, over there put in the grave....

How much they were afraid of Poland. So (Cashusko) before fighting over there in Poland, he was fighting in United States here. Washington could not give money or so to Cashusko. He gave him territory here, United States. Now, (Cashusko) at that time, he went to Poland, here all that stuff he got, he gave that to Jefferson, (Cashusko) to Jefferson. And that is in the books. That's true. And say to Jefferson -- at that time it was commerce, you know, catching the black people in Africa, bringing them here and selling them on the market. So he says, okay, (Cashusko) gave them to (indiscernible) and say, okay, but all the people who are available to buy, buy them, make them free and sent them to school. Himself, he was engineer. He knew what the knowledge, you know, education is. And so he gave that to -- and he went to Europe. That's later on what happened with that stuff. Then Jefferson was afraid. He says, okay, will I sell everything what I have, my own slaves? Because Jefferson also had the slaves.

**Of course. Yes.**

Yes. So he gave that to Jefferson and say buy the slaves, make them free and give them the education. So over there they were afraid if something like that will be made in Europe that that means Austria -- different people, you know, they were not human. They are not equal over there. There were the rich ones, there were the middle ones and there were the poor ones. And there were also the white slaves over there.

So you have the example how and why they were afraid, you know.



**Today is Friday, June 26th, ten o'clock in the morning. And we're in Special Collections in the reading room. Again, this is Claytee White. And I'm with Marian -- Wojciechowski.**

**Okay. We're going to try to start where we left off. We were talking about when Germany invaded Poland. And you had told us a little about the battle, what had happened. So tell me what happened when those battles ended that day or that period of time.**

See, at that time the battle was finished, let's say by the end of the month, we surrendered. The only thing it is that before they surrendered, the Polish general already at that time, he, I would say, voted that we will start the underground before we ended the actual war, you know. It was already at that time stated and it was, you know, already written. And Polish foreign, I would say, ambassadors and so on in France and England at that time they say, okay, we started, you know. So actually it was like only, you know, from official war and outside war. It started the war underground.

So one day before that -- and they changed the names. The first one was (Suswajuset for Polski). That would be the service to the victory of Poland. And with this name then it was, oh, up to next year or so. And then they change the name of the same unit. The same changed the name and (Sevognset vike Sebrona). That would be like we would say that association of the military. I would say military fights with them. And then they changed it by the end of that. They changed that (Armia Kriova). That means home army, Polish, in Poland army. But still it was all, you know, started.

Now, what it was -- in, let's say, June I believe -- I could check that right now in my notes -- but that was in the notes over there that, you see, was Auschwitz organized by Germans for Polish people. They didn't see it at that time. They didn't talk at that time yet, you know, about Jewish people. They wanted to sell the Jewish people. That means they say, okay, you take them, but you pay us for that, that we give them to you, the Jews, and to send the Jews to Madagascar or somewhere else, Jewish people, but to pay for that, you know, to the Germans. But, you see, at that time Poland sent I would say like spies. But there was information from Poland to England and later on to United States and started, you know, already at that time they started killing the Jews.



**So now, you said something earlier about being paid. Now, explain that a little clearer.**

Yes. You see, from our books we got at that time and so on, it is that Hitler wanted to, I would say, get rid of the Jews, but wanted to give them, you know, send them somewhere outside, not keeping them in Poland, but send them somewhere else. But at that time they say pay us for that. They wanted to have the money.

**So the Germans wanted money for the Jews?**

Yes.

**And whom did they expect to get the money from?**

From England and from United States.

**Ah. So if they had received money, they would not have harmed the Jews?**

Then also in, for instance, some countries over there like Italy you know, Germans, they say, okay, okay, give us money. And Jews with the help of the Vatican, you know, they gave them some money, what they could afford. So since they didn't have enough what they wanted, so also the Vatican gave them the money. That means the priests gave them the money to the Jews to pay to give this money to the Germans so they will not kill all of them at that time they started. They started already killing at Auschwitz Polish, originally for Poland. But later on they took the Jews in.

Now, at that time, you know, with the underground, what that means, our heads here in the meetings over there, the Holocaust, they say, Marian, you are Jew. I say why I am Jew? You are in concentration camp? Yes. Then in the consideration we're only Jews. No. Now, you see, what you did that? Why you went to concentration camp? Why did they take you?

You see what it was that they, I would say underground, we in Poland, what they did, for instance, they already started the fight with Russia, Germany with Russia. Now, then the Germans had to prepare their wagons or trains, not one, but many with food, with ammunition, with weapons and sending them to the first line, you know, Germany against Russia.

Now, so what we did, we tried -- for instance, there were the trains going to Russia. We, I would say, destroyed the railroad tracks so that the trains were out of circulation for, let's say, seven whole days or for weeks. We busted them up, you know, simply with the dynamite. They simply, you know, exploded the trains. So that was more, I would say, dangerous for Germans



than everything else.

So that's why they killed Polish people also. Now they took the Polish people if someone told them who they had the spies, you know, and the spies were also the Jews. Some of the Jews were spies for German. They say, okay, either you are the spy or we kill you right now.

**So the way that they rounded up people in Poland was when people told on other people?**

Yes.

**Okay. And also any Jewish person.**

Yes. Jews didn't fight with -- I would say there were some in the Polish units underground. There were some Jews also, but not too many. And they say, you see, that Jews were not too good soldiers at that time.

**Why was that?**

They were not too good soldiers. They were not, I would say, fighting. I would say they rather were trying to stay in the let's say, in the jungle, in the trees.

*The forest.*

In the forest, the Jews instead of fighting, you know. Maybe simply they say why?

Now, at the same time Poland was only one country, the only one country in the world where, you see, if you put, for instance, that container of water on the street and the Jews were going to work or they were going anyplace, you know, the Jews and seeing the water, they wanted to drink because they were, I would say, thirsty. They were hungry and thirsty. So then if the Germans have seen that, then what it was the people who put the water there for Jews were taken and they were killed and the whole family was killed. And the houses were destroyed at that time, burned down.

**Just because they were helping the Jews.**

Yes. You see, for instance as example, Frank, Anna Frank, she wrote the diary.

Yes.

And this diary is -- I would say she was arrested because someone told to German. They arrested her. They kill her. But people where she used to be, they kept everything. And after the war they gave her diary to the Jews. Now, if that will be in Poland, then, you see, the first thing it is she would be taken, killed. But the house in which she was would be burned down, would be



destroyed. And then the people who, I would say, kept her in the house, all of the people, not only one brother or so, all the family with the small children, everyone would be killed.

Now, if, for instance, say, they kept and they saved more in Poland, you know, they had to, I would say, figure out, to think about. They say, okay, fine. What to do not to get, you know, my family involved in that? Because I will ask you. For instance, let's say that you are my friend from before the war. So during the war I take you and keep you in my house. And then someone tells that you are in my house. They come and they kill all my family. Now, I will be asking right now the Jews themselves would you keep your family -- will you keep your, let's say, brother or sister and her family or his family knowing that if the German will find out all your family will be killed and the house will be destroyed?

**Yes that makes it difficult. Because if I had to answer that for myself, that's one thing. But now I have to consider my children, my husband, that makes a difference.**

Yes. Right. So that was, for instance, over there in Netherlands it was possible to have the Anna Frank and her diary because, I would say, she was killed, but no one else, no one else.

Like in Poland, for instance as an example, we have right now in Poland over there, we have -- it was the case where the Jews were taken and they knew that they would be killed by Germans. They were on their way to be killed. And they had very small child born. I don't know exactly how old, but maybe months, maybe a week, but little infant. And with this infant, the parents were going over there. But since there were many of them, they go on the street. And the streets were no, I would say, fences. So they went next to the houses. And that was in summertime. So all windows of the houses are open. And the people in the houses are looking at that. And they could not take anything because the German soldiers were going with the Jews together and just trying to kill if someone was out of line or so. Now, but the Jewish family went to one of the open windows giving them the child, the infant. They didn't want to take the child. They were afraid. But the lady says, okay, take the child. Maybe the child will be in the future sometimes a priest. They just simply said so.

Now, what it was that they took the child. They took the child. War was ended. The child grew up. Other children started to, I would say, laugh out that the boy was -- it was a boy, Jewish. And, you know, he was already seven years old, ten years old. And the other children knew from



their parents that this child is a Jewish child. So they called him Jew even to his mother. He didn't know that. So he went to the mother, to the lady who took care of him, you know, him to the mother and to the father and ask them why they call me Jew? They say, oh, they are bad boys. But they didn't tell him what's wrong now.

Now he was around 17 years old, the boy. He says he was going to the school, you know, middle school, and he says he wants to be a priest. Now, so he went to the school and he went to the seminary to be a priest. Now, at that time he was already a priest someone called him Jew. So he went to the sisters, the nuns...And asked, says, what it is? Why they call me? And the sisters say, okay, Father -- because he was already father at that time -- that means like -- and they say, Father, I tell you the truth. Yes, you [were born] Jewish. So you are Jewish.

So he says, okay, so I am Jew, but I am Catholic priest. So he says okay. He started learning Hebrew. He started learning Jewish. And he knew good English -- good Hebrew and good Jewish and, of course, Polish. And so he says, okay, let's see to try to find someone from the family. Maybe he's still alive. So to go to Israel and to check for -- he found in Israel the brother of his father, his uncle. He was still alive and was in Israel. But what happened he didn't want to, I would say, recognize him, the Catholic priest, because he says we are Jewish religion and you are Catholic. We don't want to talk to you. We don't want to have anything to do with you.

And he comes back over there to his seminary over there. He was already the teacher over there of the seminary. And it was so that they came from Israel, came, I would say, all the people, the young children, young children let's say around 15 to 20 years old came to visit this -- not him. They didn't know about him. They just to visit this area because they knew that in this area Jews eventually were. And so I would say in charge of the Catholic priests over there, the superior came to him and he says he already knew that he's Jewish. So he says, okay, they come here. So you will, I would say, take them, show them everything, talk to them and tell them how it was. And he's thinking about how can I tell them that my uncle did not recognize me and didn't want to recognize me because I am Catholic? And I am Catholic he says. So this way, you know -- and he is still in Poland and here.

After we came here I found out that here in Las Vegas first time I found out that it is Christian Jews. There are Christian Jews. And so I talk to them. I gave them address to him over



# 21 PUŁK ULANÓW NADWIŚLAŃSKICH

Kapituła Odznaki Pułkowej  
Koło Żołnierzy, ich Rodzin i Przyjaciół  
21 Pułku Ułanów Nadwiślańskich

**LEGITYMACJA**  
do HONOROWEJ OFICERSKIEJ  
ODZNAKI PUŁKOWEJ 21 PUN

nr: 40

rozkaz: 7/06-11.XI.06



21 PUN  
mjr ZBIGNIEW  
STRZEŻYŃSKI  
ppor. KRYSZYNA WIERCIAK

por. JERZY STAWIARZ  
por. CEZARY KOWALSKI



Pan płk.  
**MARIAN**  
**WOJCIECHOWSKI**

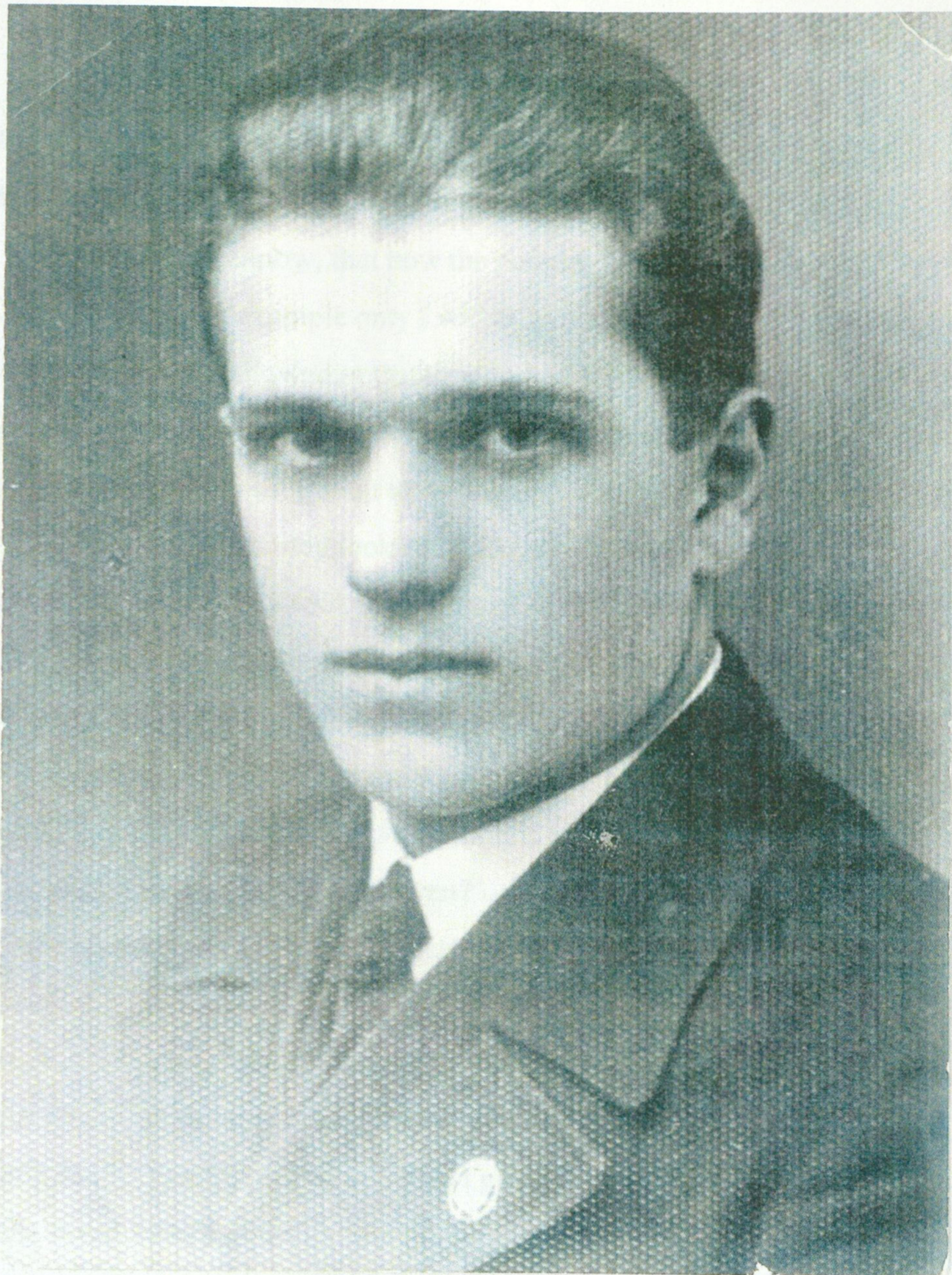
ODZNACZONY ZOSTAŁ HONOROWĄ,  
OFICERSKĄ ODZNAKĄ  
21 PUŁKU ULANÓW NADWIŚLAŃSKICH  
za KULTYWOWANIE TRADYCJI  
KAWALERII POLSKIEJ

HONOROWY DOWÓDCA  
21 PUŁKU ULANÓW NADWIŚLAŃSKICH  
I KAPITUŁA ODZNAKI PUŁKOWEJ  
21 PUŁKU ULANÓW NADWIŚLAŃSKICH

płk JERZY TACZAŁSKI  
por. WACŁAW ZAWADA  
płk WŁADYSŁAW ERHARDT









there in Poland. I say if you want you can invite him to come here and be with you and find out how it was.

So, you see, now, that how the people, the children and how the people tried to help the Jews. Now, as an example only I will tell you that one lady, Polish lady, Catholic lady, during that time she was allowed at that time to be like nurse and she was allowed to go into the ghetto, Jewish ghetto. And so she smuggled the children, small, out of the ghetto. Now, and what it is, you know, she was caught on that. She was, I would say, tortured. She had broken hands, legs and so on. And then they took some money someone gave them and they, I would say, pay to the Gestapo. And so they took her out from jail because she was in jail. And so they took her out from the jail and sent her out.

**So the Gestapo could be bribed?**

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. The Gestapo was bribed by me. Yes. And she, before the end of the war, she smuggled out of the ghetto 2,500 children.

**So what happened to the children?**

The children were given to the people and to give to the people she knew and they knew. Right now I got the book written in Polish for my superior friend before the war and during the war and later on. I was arrested. And they were not arrested. And the father and mother and the two daughters, all of them are right now, I would say, recognized by Israel and the trees are over there in Israel by them, you know, put that growing, that they saved each one, saved many more. And she saved 2500 people.

**Wonderful. Tell me about the day that you were arrested.**

You see, with me it was so that I had a friend in the war where I was in coop movement in Poland. And I was one of the youngest ones at that time. And so, you see, a friend of mine who was, oh, about ten years older than me, he had two sisters. One of them was doctor, medicine, and the other one was just finished high school. The father was arrested because he was fighting from Poland in the First World War. So right now when the Germans came in, they arrested him, you know, because the spies kept that in the files that he was fighting Germans in the First World War. And they took him to the concentration camp and kill him, the father.

The younger daughter, she swore that she will fight Germans. So she says, okay, she gave



her name that she is German, not Polish, but German. And she was -- you know, all the papers says German, younger -- driving by train through Germany. She was looking for factory of weapon. Then she says, okay, how to get to this factory from where? Let's say that here is the roads, this one and there is one, and that is so many steps, so many steps, you know, from the crossing of the roads. So she put that all in writing. She wrote that, you know. Now, how to get that to, let's say, England so English, I would say, air force will throw the bomb over there, destroy the factory. So she did that.

Once she was caught on that and she was trying to get out. When she was out they were after her, but she says she got into the train and then she was, I would say, in the train for the next stop and got out. And they didn't know that. So she thought that she escaped from them. Now, what happened she did not escape. They went after her. She didn't know that. They are after her. She got to the hotel where she was overnight, you know, in the hotel. She went to the hotel. She wrote the letters and one of the letters to me that she escape the Gestapo. Now, she dropped the letter in the hotel over there in the mail and being sure that the letter I get -- I was in Berlin. I was at that time in Warsaw. So I got the letter. There were three letters like that, one to her brother and one to me and one to someone else that was another man killed later on in Auschwitz. And so what it was they started everywhere after her.

Now, how she got to me, her brother was my friend from work. So he says, Marian, it is -- Poland was divided -- part of Russia, they took part of Poland, and the other part Germany. But in the Germany they were divided in two parts. One part was, I would say, only German could live. And the other parts were for the rest of the people, Polish people. And so they took that. The people from those parts where it was Germany, there were some so-called (Falsdutch), that was Polish people before the war. They say we are Polish. And they were Polish people. But at the time Germans came and the Germans says, okay, whoever is of German decent he will be free, not arrested, not any persecuted or so, will stay as before the war. So they say, okay, we are German because they were of German decent, many, because, you see, for instance, some of the German names were Polish people and some of Polish name were German. So, you see, this way you see what I mean. They was to go to, I would say, borderline.

The borderline was over there where I was, I would say, allowed to drive through because



I was in the coop. And, Germans they wanted to have the coop because we did the work they wanted to have, you know, I would say, or take the cattle, so-and-so many crops of different types and so on. So we take that for the Germans. Yes. So okay. So I was able to go and transfer the people. So she wanted me to do so.

**Were you part of the underground?**

I was part of the underground already before that. Now, so what it was -- and he was part of the underground. Everyone.

**Her brother?**

Yes, her brother. So what it was at that time that they -- sometimes I have seen that someone is going after me. I'm going to the bus to drive to go somewhere. Someone is in the back --

**Following you?**

Following me. And then again following me. Then again following me. And that was weeks and months. So I says, okay, I move from one place that -- I didn't have any own house at that time, but I was just renting the place. And once it was that I am going to the house where I rented the place and going into the, I would say, gate over there. And I turn around and I see the same man whom I have seen in the morning who was after me. So I knew that. So I moved from rental place to another. I was never in one place longer than, let's say, one month, two months, three months and move. Why? I didn't want to -- if I would be long time then, you see, the German could arrest the people where I was living, renting the place. They could arrest them. I didn't want to have them arrested. So if I will be over there just, let's say, one month, then they would say I don't know him; he just move in. Yes.

And they moved the apartments, you know, or rooms, they moved that because they wanted -- I pay for. So there was no other work to do or so. So, you see, they wanted to have extra a little bit income. So that's why. And you see what it was.

Now, it was so that they got the order from Berlin to arrest all the people and her. So they arrested her, you know, in Berlin because she was back already over there. Her father was already dead. Yes. And then they wanted to go and they wanted to go to me. I didn't know, you know, for sure what, when, who, how.

So I say, okay, at that time I was as the inspector of the coop. I was the inspector of the



coop. So I went to that place in Poland, (Pershea de Burlansk), to the place to inspect the coop. Of course, the coop over there in charge was the man, German, speaking both languages because he was German from Poland. So he was in charge. And I work with him very fine. Usually I was about two weeks inspecting the place. And later on going to the office and in the office setting I wrote the report, which took me again about two weeks or so, sometimes three weeks, one week or so, depends. And so, you see, and what it was I at that time went over there. I was on inspection.

Now, they came to arrest me in Warsaw where I used to be the first at that time where the letter came to. But they arrested the man who was, you know, owner. By coincident he had the same name as me, Wojciechowski, but no relation at all. And he rented the place to me. They arrested him and they ask him where I am. He says I don't know where he is. Where he works? Okay. He works here. He knew where I was working.

So they went to the office over there. And they say okay. They didn't say Gestapo. They say, okay, we know that you keep the people here and jobs showing so we cannot take them to Germany to work in Germany, work in the factories and so on in Germany. But he says we want to see everyone who is on the list. And we have the list. And so they took that from A to Z, this one, this one. And they say Wojciechowski, Marian, where is he? He is no longer with us. He is transferred to other office.

I knowing that, being afraid that might happen, I ask my superior to transfer me to the other office because I says something wrong. And he knew what that means. And he -- okay. He took the man from other there off his transfer to his office and me transfer in his place over there in the other place in Radom. So this way, you know, they say he is over there.

Then they came to me over there to the office. And where is he? He is right now inspecting, I would say, coop such-and-such. And says okay. And they went out. But immediately they sent, you know, telephone to over there arrest him.

And I at that time, you see, at lunchtime I went over there with one of the girls over there which I already found out before that she speaks perfect Spanish. She was a student of the university in Italy. But being of Polish, I would say, origin she came to Poland for vacation and still was in Poland. But did not arrest. No. So, you see, knowing that she speaks Spanish, I says



to her that can we go together and where we will go. The best place is where no one else wants to go. That is in the cemetery.

So we went to the cemetery. Cemetery always, you know, people come, put the flowers on and so on. So I went with her to the cemetery. And I ask her. She told me that she is in home army, that she is also, but she says she does nothing because no one ask her for anything to do. She says I already swear to be. So I says, okay, I can give you the job. You can be working here in the coop, but at the same time you will be given someone who you know and we know will be bringing to you the papers and you will translate these papers and you will tell the papers totally translated in Spanish, but you will put that on radio to Spain. Polish language and German language many people knew. Russian language also. But Spanish it would take longer time until they will find someone who will understand Spanish. So she says fine.

Okay. And after we agreed to that, we came back. At the cemetery we took half-hour or one hour or so. And I came. And over there they all told me, Marian, the commissioner, the man who is in charge of the coop, the German, wants to see you. That was normal things because some questions were every day. So I talk to him. So I am going to him and in his office is Gestapo. And they already -- he tells me, Marian, I don't know what it is. I am very sorry. But these German are here and they told me they have the order to arrest you. So he protested. He was German, but he protested. He says, Yes, we want to have him. So he protested, but called later on Radom. And they said, no, bring him immediately. They arrest me, take me over there to the headquarters.

At that time about, oh, a week or a few days before that what it was, you see, as the coop working with the Germans, we had the privilege of getting the tickets for buses and for trains without any waiting in the line. And that was very much. I was at that time in Radom. That means where the headquarters was. I was over there. At that time I went to the director office, ticket office, and show my card and my number and so on and show to them. And they sold me ticket immediately.

I went outside. It was nice weather. So the train had to be, oh, maybe half-hour or so. So I was smoking cigarettes outside. At that time I was a lot of smoking. After a while the man comes to me. He was in the jail uniform. He comes to me and he says to me, Mister, I have seen



you bought the ticket without line. Now, to the train maybe that will be done maybe ten, 20 places available. But the people in line that want to go to the train there are maybe 200. So a lot of them, most of them will stay. So he says I show you. He shows me he got like --

*Oh. Like a telegram.*

Yes. He showed me that in writing. And he says my sister is in Warsaw. The train was to Warsaw. My sister in Warsaw is sick and she said to me to come because she might eventually die.

**Now, this was your sister?**

He came to me and says, okay, would I buy him the ticket, to me asking me to buy ticket. Of course, that could be also, I would say, maybe given, you know, as just to spy on me and say he is doing that which he should not do. I should not buy the tickets for the people, you see. But I am risking. I say so what?

So okay. I says okay. And I went to the other office. You know, tickets sold in three places or so, not just one office, but three or four places. So I went to the other one, showed again my papers and got the ticket and went outside. And not just shaking hands with him, in the hand was a ticket for him. So he had it. It happened so that he helped me to get into the train and he got also. He was strong man into the train. And we were in the same place talking underway to Warsaw. Now, fine.

Now, at the time, you know, they arrested me in the place over there, they brought me in the night, in the middle of the night almost, you know, to Radom to the jail and he was on duty over there. He says, Mister, what happened? What it is? And I says to him, Yes, they arrested me. And he says he was ready to go with me to escape. But I was thinking if I escape they will arrest my whole family -- my mother, my brothers, my sisters. They will arrest all of them. So I says no. If they kill me, they kill me, sure, but not anyone else. He was not married. So there was him. But also it was his sister. And so I says no, no, I cannot do that. But he says, okay, whatever you have on you -- he tell me that whatever you have what is no good for Germans to see -- he open the --

*Furnace.*

-- furnace. But small -- in the middle of the big room over there was furnace. And he opened that



and said throw that here. So all the papers I had, you know, where the people are, addresses or so, everything I threw over there and was destroyed.

**I want to ask a question. When you would get a letter from that lady, what did you do with those letters?**

What?

**The woman who was looking at the various factories in Germany, she sent you a letter.**

Yes. The letters, you know, she gave to me and I was sending them to, again, her brother or someone else. And they gave that to put on radio to England. So this way the other lady over there at the cemetery, she would be doing that not in Polish or not in German. She would be doing that in Spanish. Now, so what it is, you see, at that time they -- so I stayed over there.

**So you burned everything that you had on you, all the letters.**

Whatever was no good was destroyed. So at the time they came, took my small like bag with that stuff -- not bag, but --

**Briefcase.**

Yes. A small one. So it was empty, almost empty, almost. So what that means stuff (indiscernible) and so on, that's left.

Now, what happened you see they first sent to me man who was German but spoke perfect Polish. So I ask him even where from you speak so good? And he says, oh, he says, I learn that extra. So okay. Now, first he ask me what I know to tell him, what I think is wrong and the people what I think they are, I would say, wrong.

Now, I knew already. They send me to the room over there one cup of some food. And in that -- the food was thick. And in that was small I would say --

*It was a rolled up little piece of paper that was inside the cereal.*

Yes. And they didn't check on that, you see. So I ate the food, but I took that. And later on, as everybody was busy with something else, I read that. And that was over there that the whole family of my friend, this one and including that, are arrested. So I knew that they are arrested. But they were three people, brother and two sisters. Each one was involved in different other stuff against Germany.

**All in the underground.**



Underground, each one. I knew all of them, but I didn't know what to tell because if I tell them, I may tell them something that they don't know. So I says I don't know. I don't know. So they beat me so badly that, for instance, if I ate, you know, they gave piece of bread, so I took spoon, put that on the spoon, and with the spoon because I could not take that so far to the mouth. So with the spoon, you know, to put that to eat I was so beaten. Here. Here. You see, this way and hanging over there above that and beaten and by legs, you know, down. So it was all the joints at that time.

So anyway, the last one, the last one, you know, was the man who beat me so badly. And, of course, that was on the attic over there. And over there he was doing that. And he asked me what more? What more, right? I don't know. So he says I cannot help you anymore. The Gestapo. That Gestapo man was beating me. And I says you want to help me and you're beating me so badly? And he says yes. I says why? And he says because they have the letter, your letter in the office downstairs over there and you don't want to tell me that you got such letter. Ah, now I know what to tell them. I says yes, yes, I got the letter, but what? And they say, oh, because they have the letter, but you didn't tell them anything on the letter. I says of course not. He says why?

And he took me down to the office. And other people in the office were just writing and he was beating. And so I says, yes, because, I says, over there in the letter is that she is laughing and she's, I would say, joking that Gestapo -- she, I would say, trick it, Gestapo. And I says how could I tell you that someone is cheating Gestapo? No one can cheat the Gestapo. But I knew already what to tell him. So, yes, why didn't you tell us that? Because I thought that she's stupid. She was writing the letter, but she was stupid because no one can cheat the Gestapo.

What it was at the time they beat me so badly in the office over there they spoke, you know, about me and about the torture I was taking. Now, they were giving me the torture. Now, what it was it was over there one of the secretary, German, she didn't speak Polish. She spoke German. And I spoke German very well at that time because of the school. I was learning the German four years in the high school and three years in the university. And so I spoke German, I would say, fairly well at that time. So I spoke with her whatever she had to tell and to translate that. At that time I was with her together. Now, that was -- and so she knew me. And she was



sorry for me at the time I was tortured. So she says, okay, I tell you something. I know how to do that to pay the money to Gestapo.

And then they spoke together and they say, okay, fine. They figure out that they will send me to concentration camp, Auschwitz, but they will not put that sentence in. So if I survive, survive. But, you see, because those that had that sentence, for instance, three months or six months or one year, and after one year if he was still alive, they took him and shot him over there. So that was the agreement.

Now, they gave the money to my brother, the priest, and gave the money to him and told him to hold to give to the man, German, who were speaking both languages well. And he was attorney and he was representing like Gestapo, you see. So they paid the money. My brother gave to him. He divided between himself and the Gestapo men over there who knew about and who agreed to that. And, you see, so this way they did not kill me.

**How much money?**

He didn't check. He did not, I would say, count that. He just got that in the morning and go straight over there and go to the attorney. The attorney knew already that he will come in and took that and says, okay, I will try to do whatever I can.

Now, what he did, he did one thing besides that, you know. There was no death sentence. That was one thing. And the second thing it is -- I still have that here -- he signed the letter to take me out from the concentration camp back to the work because the job, which I was doing in the coop movement, is very, I would say, much needed for the German people. So this way they got that. I was at that time sick. First I was sick on typhus. And later on after I got good I got sick again. And what it was the sickness -- the first was typhus. But the second one was pneumonia. *See, dad's already in the camp.*

**Right. Wow. Amazing.**

Now, I just finish that.

*It could be bronchitis. Pleurisy. Kidney infection. So he was very sick.*

Yes, you see. So they didn't want to, I would say, release me, in such bad shape.

**So when your brother made the deal that you were going to go back to being in the coop, how long were you going to have to stay in the concentration camp?**



That was three years. I still would have two and a half years more because all together I was in concentration camp three years.

**Three years.**

Three years. Yes. But that -- they got that. How much they -- how they did that again, you see, how they did that, they took that, for instance, cup like wheat or flour -- flour. That flour, for instance, in the coop you could buy that very cheap. But, now, flour on the open market was very high. So they took that from coop, sold that under market, private market, and that was the money to pay --

**For people like you that they wanted to get out.**

Yes. Yes. Maybe even sometimes what they did, sometimes what they did, they sold that to outside or so. Anyway, that was the bribe.

**So that's how they got the money for the bribes.**

Yes, for the bribe.

**So how long have we been here? We've been talking --**

*How much time elapsed?*

**You know, I can't tell. It looks like a little over an hour. That's what it looks like.**

*I think that's probably good because I can tell when dad gets a little emotionally into it. And he needs a rest.*

**Okay, good.**

*Is this a good point because Auschwitz is --*

**That's right.**

*He didn't tell you enough about the torture, but it was horrific.*

**Okay. About the?**

*The torture that he endured.*

**Oh, yes.**

*He still has no feeling in his fingers. His hearing is gone from the beatings and other things. But you can't tell that for 95.*

**No. Ninety-five, wow.**

**Today is July 2nd, 2009. And I'm with Marian again. We're here in Special**



**Collections, the reading room at UNLV.**

**Marian, again for the record will you please pronounce your last name for me?**

Wojciechowski.

**Wojciechowski. I'm getting closer.**

Yes, Wojciechowski.

**Wojciechowski. I'm getting close. One day I'm going to surprise you.**

Yes. I thought about changing my name, shortening my name. And I don't -- I would say maybe wonder that some people of all nationalities if they have the names too long, then they shorten the names.

**A lot of people do.**

And many Germans and many different names shortened. So also some of the Polish people change that and shorten. But question is that right now hearing on TV watching, you know, the names for instance from India, from let's say Pakistan, from Arabic countries, they have the names twice as long.

**That's right.**

You see. And we learn to pronounce them.

**That's right. We do it.**

Yes. We pronounce them.

**But it's your name. So keep it.**

Yes. So for me that's no problem. Question is this way or the other way? But for my children and grandchildren? Yes. For instance, she was born with the other name. Yes. And why? At that time because in Poland at that time we're Communists. And now since I was anticommunists very strong and very loud, you know, then I was scared that my family knowing the name will eventually be arrested or maybe even target, you know, just because they will find out that I am. So that's why being in the American army I had a different name.

**What was your name in the Army?**

Wojmar. If I take down my name, it's Wojmar. Three letters here, three letters here.

**So W-O-J-M-A-R became your last name?**

Yes.



**What was your first name?**

Marian.

**Okay. I see.**

*I think it was Ian.*

At that time in the papers, American papers it was Marian. So John was the first name and Wojmar was the last name, Wojmarian.

**So it was W-O-J-M-A-R. I-A-N.**

Yes.

*W-O-J-M-A-R. And the first name was Ian. So he just took a few letters there and -- because Ian in Polish is John.*

**Oh, I see.**

And, you see, I was contacted by family in Poland especially my brothers. But at that time through someone who didn't say anything about me. So that's why they did not know. But at that time I was going out of the army -- I was released for reduction of force, American army. So reduction of force. So at that time I knew that I'm out of army and I can right now be again civil. So American papers I have Marian -- that's Ian. Wojmar Ian, then Marian Wojciechowski. So in the American -- I was at that time. So it is both names, my original name, Marian Wojciechowski and Wojmar. And that was many like that, many I would say officers especially, not soldiers, not so many because maybe they were not so active, you know, anticommunist.

**So at what point were you in the American army?**

After I got out from concentration camp. After I got out then I went to -- I was still at that time in Czechoslovakia. And so at that time I went to the borderline between Germany and Czechoslovakia. But at that time Germany was at that time -- that was the communist part of Germany because Germany was divided at that time. So it was divided. So I went -- we were in so-called displaced person camp, DP camps. And I was still after the camp -- after the concentration camp I was still in Germany for five years until '50 until Congress United States use the law that a displaced person, you know, if they will get here invitation to work in United States, they will have lodging and food.

**You were in the displaced camp for five years?**



Five years, Yes. But from these five years it was about two years in the American army, not quite two years, a little bit less. And then more I was in the displaced person camp as liaison officer. I was the representative of the whole -- in the American zone of Germany, American zone. So I was the representative of the whole Polish group at that time to IRO, International Refugee Organization, I-R-O. I was the only from Polish group. From each one group was one person. So there was one from Russia, one from Ukraine now, one from Poland, one from, let's say, each country where the people were over there.

**Were there any Jewish people in the displaced camp?**

Now, the Jewish people, they were displaced. But, you see, at that time already Jewish people got more smart, you see, and they got the Jewish people separately. And they took them first.

**Okay. So they helped them first.**

They got them first. So what that means—not American government took them first. But the Jewish people being in different positions in American -- Yes, America. You see, originally at that time when (Carski) came as a spy, came from Poland to England, said all that what he had seen. He was in ghetto in Poland. The Jewish people say, okay, we show you everything. So they took him where they were killing people and so on in Poland, not Auschwitz. Then he went over there. They allowed him to go also. But how they allow him? They took him, dress him as Latin soldier in the service of Latin -- or in the service of Germany. And they put him instead as a soldier and they show him everything, you know, in the ghetto. This way he has seen the ghetto. And then at the time he came first to England and said everything to the Polish government in exile how it was, then at that time was General Scorski, Polish prime minister. He says now you go and tell all the same stuff what you told me, go and tell that to Roosevelt.

**Now, this was before the concentration camp started?**

The concentration camp started already.

**Oh, it had already started. Okay.**

Yes. And so concentration camp in Auschwitz, for instance, started in 1940. So at that time he came to --

**Oh, 1940. It had started that early?**

Yes. In 1940.



**So was this person able to talk to Roosevelt?**

Yes. Auschwitz was started in 15 June 1940.

Then at that time Auschwitz was to kill not Jews. Auschwitz was to kill Polish. Jewish people were at that time not killed yet.

**So that location started for the Polish people.**

Yes, for the Polish people. And they thought that giving the Jewish people to the west -- to England, to France and to United States -- that they will be paid for.

**That's right. They were going to sell them.**

Yes, they wanted to sell them. But since at that time -- now, he came to United States and he talked first to Roosevelt. And Roosevelt says I will think about that. And then he talked to (Frankfurter). (Frankfurter) was a Jew and he was the highest person as the adviser to Israel but also the highest person from the Jews in United States, you see. And he says I don't believe you. He says that's impossible.

**Did Roosevelt believe it?**

Roosevelt didn't believe because -- no. (Frankfurter) told him and that was so. So they didn't believe that. So this way, you know, they wanted to sell them, move them somewhere else, not to United States. Now, some people think that simply the Jews in United States were afraid that these poor people from Europe, Jews, will come here. Then what we will do with them? What we will do? They know no language, know nothing. So what we can do? But, see, the second thing they thought that -- after all Germany had such high regard, you know. So they say German people could do something like that? Impossible.

**So at that time the Jewish community had high regards for the Germans.**

Yes. Yes.

**And I guess a lot of Jewish people in Germany had very, very high positions.**

Yes.

**So they had no reason at that point.**

Yes. So that's why, high position and a lot of money. Yes, the money. What they did also, the Jewish people, they put the money -- they were smart -- they put the money in this Swiss bank.

**That's correct.**



So at that time they didn't want to tell them that they have the money. But right now they are looking for the accounts, so many years' interest and so on.

**That's right.**

So there are millions of dollars.

**Oh, billions probably now.**

Yes. So right now, you see. So that's why. But Auschwitz itself was not for Jews. It was for Polish people.

**Okay, at the beginning. So tell me what that experience was like for you. And you can talk about it in any way that you want to.**

You see, at that time in 1940 I was in Poland. And I came back to the coop movement because I was as they called it inspector, you know, to inspect. In Poland there were three or four types of coops. The first was agriculture coop. Agriculture, that means whatever farmer has to buy and whatever farmer has to sell. That was one. The second one was except from that, whatever, you know, it was butter, milk, you know. And butter was separate because they had to have separate machinery for that, you know.

**So dairy products.**

Yes. And they called them eggs and butter coops. Now, that is two. The third one were banks. They were small banks in the village. There were bigger banks, coop banks in the counties. And they were very big coop. They were dealing with the coops, you know, saving for them, put that in savings account, and also lending the money to them to buy something, build houses and so on, you know. Then that was three. Then the fourth one would be the different type, namely housing. So there was coop for housing and especially there were coops, for instance, teachers from this area, all of them, they say, okay, we build apartments and we will be a little bit alike, but completely different. But it was housing coop like what here are condominiums. The difference is that over there if you build the coop and you are the member, you are the member of the whole coop.

**So all four.**

Yes, all. You see, so what that means if something needs improvements all the members were responsible for improving, for instance, the roofs, walls, whatever.



**So it's like my homeowner's association.**

Yes. Here is different. Here, for instance, if you buy you make the coop, a like coop, then you buy only inside. Outside you are not -- now, you are involved in one unit, for instance, and you live there. For instance, if the parents die then the children take that over, you see. Over there it was not. So what that means here each one, I would say, resident of that is his own owner. He owns that. Over there he does not own this unit. He might live in this unit, but if, for instance, he leased a bigger unit, then he goes over there and they change him if they have it available. If they don't have it available, they tell him wait until we find. Yes. So what that means -- that's the difference between here and over there.

Now, I was of the agriculture. So what that means -- now, what it was that we didn't have from Germany any special benefits or so. But we had, for instance, special benefits maybe like (in Polish) doing the job, which the Germany wanted to have done. For instance, they wanted to put the people, you know, they wanted to put people to pay so-and-so much for this acre of land or crop. For instance, you get so much, for instance, wheat, then part of that you had to give. Now, but they decided how much you have to pay, Germany. They decided in advance you have to give and they don't care where from you get that, you see. So that was the same, for instance, someone had living stock, cows, for instance, they say, okay, if you have three cows, one cow is ours. It belongs to Germany.

**So it means that the milk from that one cow, the whatever.**

Milk, that was one thing. But, say, if you wanted to kill it, you have to get the permission, you know, license permission to do that. To kill the swine you have to have the permission. So the farmers had nothing left. So what they did, the farmers, they paid to the German officials who put, you know, how much you have to give. So they pay him extra something or they pay him or they gave him some extra meat, extra milk, extra butter to him so he will not put too much.

**So they bribed him.**

Bribe, yes. That they did. So this way the farmer -- for instance, okay, they took big swine and small swine. The small swine may be big maybe in one year, two years, three years. But question is they kill them right now. And the little ones, they say that is for the government, but that will be ready like in one year. Some they bribed if you could. If you could. Sometimes you could.



Sometimes you could not. They eventually arrested the people if they bribe them if the Germans talked to the officials. They arrested the farmer and they sent the farmer or his family or so to Germany working the factories and working, you know, in the mines for at that time the war started, which that was already World War started before with Poland and England and France, but right now with Russia. So they needed, you know, as much work as necessary. Now, and also as much as they could they took that from the farmers for German army, for German people and so on and so on.

**So they needed food, they needed workers, everything.**

Yes. Right. Right. Miners and so on. Now, I was inspector. But what was good for us that the inspectors, they could, for instance, go in the territory where they were working. So the territory was we would say like here in the province, part of the province of Poland. So, for instance, like here we would say like the state. So over there it would be something like a province. So the state. So they could go to inspect -- some of us were trained and they were inspecting the banks. There were small banks, bigger ones and so on, you know, but money. The second -- the other ones were butter and eggs. There was this other one. Then the third one was agriculture. And then was housing. So that was all together.

Now, going from place to place we could buy the tickets. We could go with them, with the trains or buses, either way. So we could go over there and we didn't have to stay in line to buy the ticket, for instance, to Warsaw. The people were going to Warsaw to see friends, to see family. Now the family before the war was working in Warsaw. And right now they're still in Warsaw. But they needed to eat something. So the parents from the farms, you know, supported them. So they killed, you know, the swine. They killed the cows. They kill the cow. You know, whatever to help them, you see, the children. Or sell that and pay -- and have the money to buy shoes, to clothes, to buy -- this way they were.

For instance, like I was in Radom, had to work Warsaw. Then in Radom there were about 200 people waiting in line to buy tickets. And they maybe could sell, let's say, 20 tickets or a hundred tickets or 50 tickets, depends how many empty places they had. This way, you know, we could buy the tickets easier, you see, because we didn't have to -- we had a special, I would say, that was like documentation that we are the inspectors for such, that we are doing the job for



Germany and that German officials are asking everyone to help us in this work.

So if, for instance, I was on the street and they caught me, I showed them the paper. Then most cases they'd let me go if they had nothing against me. If they had something that I was against the German nation or so, then they kill me. But if they had nothing else -- so this way, you know, bribing was very much also.

For instance, some people knew that he has -- they came to the people. They had them, let's say, egg or meat or so or butter and they gave him a small part of that and he would disappear, you know. Some of them were maybe Polish and wanted to go to the Polish families over there in Warsaw. So they tried to --

Now, also what it was at that time the driving from place to place I could see the people that were in the underground fighting against Germany. So this way, you know, no one knew if I have seen someone, for instance, or maybe somewhere in the restaurant or somewhere in maybe the train station. So I set up and he knew how I look like. He came to my -- may I sit next to you? Please, sit down. And we started talking. And he was the man I wanted, you know. Or this way if that was, if I mention some code, then he knows that person and he talk to me. If not, he didn't talk at all and I was waiting until the proper person comes. But that was also, you know, I would say contacts for the underground. And I was for the contact for the underground. I was at that time taking them from one place to the other, you see. Now, some of the underground were spies on big scale. So, for instance, not only in Poland, but they were going to -- they say we are German. Like this lady, this girl. My friend over there working with me together, he had two sisters. Did I talk about her to you?

**The one with the letter?**

*Yes.*

**Yes.**

Yes. You see, she sent a letter to me. Now, against me they had the letter.

**That's correct.**

Yes, they had the letter. The only thing that saved me at that time was, you know, that the man who was bribed or one of other people that were bribed at that time because there was not only one person bribed, but you had to bribe two, three people together. So now, so he told me after



torturing me and he said I told him nothing, then he says I cannot help you. And I was surprised. I says you want to help me, so you torture me here and you tell me that you want to help me? He says yes. He says yes, because they have the letter downstairs in the office and you don't speak about that. I says, yes, I can tell you, yes. Why you didn't tell us some other person ask me? Why you didn't tell us that that you got the letter from this person? I said it's very simple I thought it was stupid. How would Gestapo eventually -- in the letter it was that she, I would say, cheated the Gestapo. How you can cheat the Gestapo? It's impossible. So that's why I even didn't want to tell you that because I didn't want to look, you know, stupid. And they were paid off.

Now, in which one I was arrested, I was with one girl. I was with one girl in the cemetery during the lunchtime. Now, what it was I was to get the people and information from Germany to the borderline over there, which was also under the German, but was not only German, but were also Polish.

But, you see, so what it was, you see, if they took, for instance, to here, Poland, that was Germany and that was Russia. This part of Germany, they took -- like this one and here were all Polish people from here they took out and either to work over there for them or if they were small children also, they took them here between Russia and the borderline here. And so, you see, here. And that was like we would say people they served German, they served Polish, but they were still after all over 20 million Poles. So they put them all here and part of them in Germany to work in the mines, to work on the farms, to work whatever. So this way -- then later on they went in Russia. After the World War started then they went further. And, Yes.

So what it is that the people from Germany, they mostly spoke German, Polish, maybe Russian. And if we wanted to give any information to England, you know, underground to England or to other countries over there where it was possible, then at that time, you see, we spoke these languages we knew. But the Germany also put the receiver of the radio on Polish and German and Russian and Czech because they had the people to do so and they had the people right here. So they put German people knowing foreign languages. Yes.

Now, but this lady looking all the files, I found out what she knows; that she really is from Italy, Polish, studied in Italy and speaks perfect, you know, Italian. So then I says, okay, they don't have here. So if we will talk on radio to England in Italian, German will not get that. They



will not know what it is, you know. So this way I talk to her to get her into. -- and she agreed to. She says okay, mister, I will do that for you because that is the fight with German. And she was Polish and Italian. And so this way, you know, we agreed on that. And I say, okay, I will see that you will get not from me, but through me someone will be in her house and giving her the (indiscernible) and radio. And so someone will be with the --

**Information.**

Yes. Will be doing that with her. So show her how to do that. Now, okay. And I am coming back and they tell me, Marian, the commissioner of the coop -- that means the man who was in charge of the whole coop. That's of the people that are Polish. So I talk to him every day. At that time I spoke with also already German. So I spoke with him. And he want to see you. So I go to him to his room. And I go. And over there in his room is two people, Gestapo. And he says to me, Mister, I am sorry, but I don't know what it is. He says I don't want to do that and I protest that, but what I can do, he says. So being over there they send me. They put me over there to --  
*It was in the stairway.*

Yes, upstairs, you know, to walk. So they put the chair next to that and my hand, you know, to that so I will not escape. And they called. And the office, Gestapo, then they arrested me. And the commissioner doesn't want to give me. The commissioner needs me. And the people over there say no, you have to bring him here to Radom right now. So --

**Radom, is that the name of a city?**

*Yes. And there was a very large Gestapo prison there. And it's R-A-D-O-N.*

**Oh, good. Thank you.**

So what it was we left over there in the evening and somewhere around middle of the night we came to Radom. And they brought me to the jail. And now, the jail was, you know, on the first floor was for the criminal, I would say, stuff. So someone steals something. Someone has beaten someone else. But not political. Second and third floors were just for the political. And so they took me over there. But at the time they brought me down over there, you see, brought me in the middle, that was like here, big room here, but square more. And in the middle of the room was the oven.

**An oven? A heater?**



*A furnace.*

Furnace, Yes. Coal furnace. And so he says whatever you -- that man over there was the man I bought the tickets a couple days or couple weeks -- no. A couple days ago, maybe a week, maybe ten days ago. I bought him the ticket. I told you that.

**Yes. Now, was he in the underground?**

Underground. He was not underground with me. But at that time, you know, I was going to Warsaw from Radom, I went over there on the train station. And at that time I smoke a lot. And so I went to the booth over there where they were selling tickets and showed them my papers. And they gave me the ticket to Warsaw immediately. I took the ticket and went -- you know, paid that because that was paid. But the pay was very small. Yes.

You see, at that time the prices were double prices. For instance, it was one pound as example. As example one pound of, for instance, meat was officially, let's say, two dollars. But under open market one pound of meat was ten dollars.

**Okay. So the one price was the coop price?**

That was the price that the German paid and that the German could buy everything for this price. Now, if I was selling, for instance, butter or meat to Germany, they pay only this official price.

**The lower price.**

Yes. But if, for instance, someone went to the store and wanted to buy -- do you have meat? No. Do you have butter? No. All sold out. Sold out. But if you gave them ten dollars, you got them.

**I see.**

So, you see, there were two prices. There were two prices. So the price official, price I would say kept by Germany. Now, this over there, what it was that I was going to at that time bring different stuff to the people. And they came and could buy -- for instance, if I was under official trip and doing a job for Germany, I could buy my food and I could get my lodging in the hotel for the official German price. So that was good for me.

**That was a perk.**

But anyway, I was already arrested at that time. Now, the man who -- at that time I was brought here and it was a coal furnace. So he recognize me and I recognize him. And the question is -- he asked me what do we do now? If I would tell him we both escape, he probably will agree. We



would both escape.

But what to do later? Where to hide? We could hide in the other territory somewhere where I was not known and he was not known. How long? How long I would say someone else would recognize me? So that is one thing.

The second thing is they usually where there were cases like that where the people were arrested -- not arrested -- or arrested and escaped. But you see what it was they arrested the whole family. So my mother -- my father was dead already. But my mother, my brothers, my sisters, the whole family would be arrested. Now, do I have the right to save my own life at their expense?

So I says no, we don't escape, whatever it is. So he says if so, he tells me whatever you have on you with you in your luggage, and so on, whatever you have what is no good, you don't want the Germans to see that, throw that in the coal and stuff. So I did that. So at the time later on next day they check on that because they took that from me, my luggage and everything. So next day they check there was nothing against me.

But about two days later I got from the underground --  
*Barley cereal. Like buckwheat or something like that --*  
Barley, Yes. I got bowl or so of barley. And they have seen that -- they gave me that. They just took the knife and cut that once only, but not in -- it was in. So they gave that to me. Now, I was eating this barley. Eating this barley until I found, you know, the piece of paper and like small, very small. And so I checked that. Opened that. And at the time I went to the restroom I read that. And it was over there that the whole family of my friend, you know, this one where she was in Berlin and so on and him, her brother was with me, and her sister was doctor and so on. And so at that time I read that. So I knew that they arrested them because I read that. But I didn't know what for. It could be hundred things, you know. Each one person has belong probably to (in Polish), belong to underground.

But, now, what they know about me? What they know about them? You see, so that was the question. So at the time they were interrogating me I said nothing and I didn't say her, that she did Gestapo because I didn't know that that's the only one thing they know.

**That's right.**

So why to tell them more? So that's why at that time if I not burning that stuff, you know, then



they would know because over there I had names, people and, you know, addresses and so on. So they would be getting everyone.

**But you've burned all of that.**

Yes, I burned that. So that's why. Now, at that time they took me over there in this room, place where I was checking on, you know. At that time I says, okay, let's --

*Coop.*

Coop.

*They bribed to try to save your life and you were on your way to Auschwitz.*

Yes. But the question is now -- the agreement at the time what it was I was in the coop, they knew in the coop what I did last time, with whom I talk. They got the girl. But only one commissioner was German, the top one who didn't want to give me away. But people, the rest of them, see what I did, how I was, and she told them of our discussion. She said she promise me that she will be, you know, talking on radio to England in Italian.

**Right. Yes.**

So they say okay. But they knew already, you know, that it was because of underground. So they say okay, let's -- they did torture me. They torture me very badly. I told you how.

**Yes.**

And then the secretary of the man from (indiscernible) put in charge, his secretary was there with him, but she didn't speak Polish. And he didn't speak Polish. They spoke only in German. So they talk to me and she talks to me German. So I was talking to her in German and she talked to him. And so we had nice, you know, I would say nice relation. So this way, this discussion that they tortured me so badly, she says can you eventually pay something to bribe Gestapo? And how.

They had two -- part of the money someone else got. But part of the money they got and brought to my brother, priest, and told him to give the money to the attorney, German. He was German himself. Being in Poland before the war, you know, as representative German business, business of attorney. And he knew Polish law very good and spoke both languages good.

So I told my brother go to him, give to him at such-and-such time. He will get home and give that to him. That was all.



**And your brother was --**

Tell him only for Marian Wojciechowski. So my brother didn't know what it is. He knew because it was money. Yes. And he knew it was money. But how much, he didn't know. He got that and at that time went straight to his office in the other place. And so he was on the priests (indiscernible). And the attorney was in the other area in the same city, Yes. And so my brother went to him and says that's for Marian Wojciechowski. He took that very nicely with my brother. He sits down, so talk. He says, okay, I know what it is. And he says I will do whatever I can do; I promise you. And my brother went out. And he took the money.

Now, you see, they made agreement before, you see, that they will send me to the concentration camp, but without the sentence to die.

**Right. Because your brother negotiated that.**

Not my brother. Someone else. Someone else who had access to Gestapo. Maybe that's the secretary. Maybe someone else. I don't know.

Now, they told me later on at the time I was in (Grosrosen) -- not Auschwitz, but (Grosrosen) later on came the man, you know, who -- in whose father-in-law in Radom -- you see what I tell you. In Radom the underground arranged for me that I would be staying, living in the house of the people with the German name. (Order) was the German name. But he was Polish. And at the time German came he didn't agree he is German. He says I am Polish. I am sorry. I am Polish. So, okay, they left him. See, now, and he was -- he wanted to be sick. He says he is sick. So the German will not come into.

**So now, was this after you had been in Auschwitz?**

That was before I was transferred from -- originally I was, you know, in the coop movement in Warsaw. And later on --

**So this is that city. This is Radom.**

And later on I was spying on. So I ask and I was transferred -- to be transferred and I was transferred to Radom, to the other district. And so this way -- but I told you how they found me.

**Yes.**

So they went over there, arrested the man who was by incident also Wojciechowski, but no family.

**That's right.**



Yes. And so he told to the office where I work. And they went over there. Again, they wanted to check where is this, this, this? And at the time they came to me, he says where is this one?

**Yes. And you were not related, but you had the same name.**

Yes. So the German say, okay, where is this one on me? Say this one transferred to Radom.

Okay. If we go to Radom, we will find him over there? Yes. So this one, this one, from A to Z everyone check on and everyone had discussion. So they could not find out at that time to let me know, you know, because everyone was asked, I would say discuss.

So at that time the man from -- but the time I told them to underground in advance that I'll be moving. So I said, okay, find me the place. So they found the place, other. And he had the store, oh, like food store a little bit. They sold matches. Very small store.

**Like a little market.**

Yes. To what was with the house. But officially that was I would say with permission with everything, this store. Now, they went over there knowing, you know, over there to the office. They told him that he is living here, but he's right now inspection in (Polish name), somewhere else at that time. What it was this man mother -- he was maybe sick. Maybe he was after typhus. But he was already longer time. But he say he is still sick so the German will be afraid to go to the room of the sick man, typhus, which is, you know, contagious. The Gestapo didn't know that. Then the Gestapo wants to go to him.

Now, it happens so that couple days ago or a few days ago in Radom over there the thieves came. They told them that, the police, and they got inside the store and they robbed the store.

**Oh, okay. They pretended to be.**

Yes, they pretend. So the man, you know, was afraid that eventually the thieves also here. So he didn't want to open them. And they say we are Gestapo, but he didn't believe. So he didn't open. So what it is the old man, not the sick man, but the old man, his father wanted to go and call for real police from the other room, from the other house. So open the back door. And in the back door there were Gestapo again and shooting from machinegun. And his legs were so badly hurt that -- and they got inside from the back and killed the man who was supposedly after typhus. So they kill him. And there was a funeral that the father couldn't go because he was again in the hospital with the, I would say, broken legs.



So his daughter was married to the man also from underground who about one year or two years later -- no -- one and a half year later he was arrested and he got to (Grosrosen) and he knew my name and he knew already where I am because I let them know where I am.

And so he ask for me and he came to me and he explain to me that what they did. They decided in the coop over there. They decided to pay the money. So now, what they did they took the crop like wheat, meat, whatever they had to sell inside for the German prices, they took that to the open market, sold for the high prices and the difference money they paid to bribe the Gestapo, you see this way.

**Right. Yes.**

*Dad is getting tired. I don't think he realizes --*

So if you would be so kind and that what you got already and you put that in paper, at the time I be back, you call me, I will see then what I already told you and I will see, you know, a schedule -- we will schedule next discussion.

**But by the 15th of September we should have this transcribed and you should be able to look at what I have.**

*Because we can correct like the place names.*

**Yes. That's right.**

*And some of the clerical notes. But dad is really tired today. I'm sorry.*

**No problem.**

*We have a little surprise for you because I didn't think he'd get to Auschwitz. It's very painful for him. He says about the torture that was the worst, but Auschwitz was even harder. So it's hard for him to talk about.*

**That's what I thought.**

*But this is something that the Auschwitz Museum has been working on documentation because when the Russians so-called liberated Auschwitz they took documents with them. But this is the first volume of five volumes just from the Gestapo prison in Radom. This is transports to Auschwitz. So let's see if dad is in here.*

**Oh, my goodness.**

*I think he is.*



**Oh, my goodness.**

*I wanted to show it to you. So if you look at one of those Post-its, recognize him?*

**Oh, no. This is you.**

Yes.

**Oh, my goodness. Oh. And so your name is on the list.**

And here is the number they gave me.

**So this is your number.**

Yes. Yes, that's me. You see, that's me.

**Oh, this is you in the uniform.**

Yes. I was at that time in the officers' school Polish army.

**Now, is this your brother?**

My brother. He died already. And his older brother, they also died already.

**Now, who is this?**

My brother.

**Oh, you have two brothers.**

*Both brothers.*

**Okay. That's right. And this is the brother who was the priest?**

Yes. One brother more is not here. He died.

*He was the oldest.*

And one brother, the youngest one, he's still alive.

**Wow.**

*And I wanted to show you because it was just I'd say within the last five years that we even knew that dad's registration photo from Auschwitz survived. And we have the original -- not the original, but a copy of the original. So I keep this in a special envelope. It says from Auschwitz Museum.*

**Wow.**

*And that's dad. And my youngest nephew, his youngest grandson is so proud that he looks like (jaja), like his grandfather. And this is the only --*

**This is that --**



Yes.

**-- with the brothers.**

*Yes. That's Father (Lucian). That's Marian. That's (indiscernible). They were together at the funeral of my grandfather. So these are very precious. We hide them.*

**Oh, these are so precious. Yes.**

*And I made copies for you.*

**Oh, wonderful. Oh, this is great. Oh, thank you so much.**

*So this is of that one and this is --*

**Oh, your copies are great.**

*I go to Office Max. I use their copy --*

**Oh, these copies are great.**

*Yes. And this is dad when he was younger. This is Boy Scout, a student. So he had very dark hair, but lots of it.*

**Amazing. Thank you so much. Oh, I really appreciate this.**

*But, you know, they're doing more and more research because a lot of documents were lost. And they have to recreate the history through oral histories, what people tell you.*

**Yes. Ooh. This is amazing, simply amazing.**

*Thank you for showing an interest in this part of history.*

**Oh, yes. Oh, yes.**



## THE MARTYROLOGY OF POLES IN HITLER'S DEATH CAMPS

*Lecture by Marian Wojciechowski on May 8, 1998 at the Polish Discussion Club in the Polish-American Cultural Center in Troy, Michigan, USA*

### MOTTO:

"Who is victorious shall be free, and who has died is already free."  
-- words from "Warszawianka"

6 million victims of the Holocaust in Poland in the years 1939-1945:  
3 million Christian Poles  
3 million Jewish Poles.

The historians of future generations will research the archives, evaluate and then write how many additional hundreds of thousands of Polish Christians -- on whose orders, where, by whom and under what circumstances -- were murdered in the years 1939-1989 by the henchmen of communist authorities.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

I'm very happy that I came here, because I see that I have already met here many colleagues and friends from past times -- now pleasant ones, in America -- as well as from the times of our national martyrology: the occupation and the concentration camps. I was in three concentration camps, in Auschwitz, Gross Rosen and Leitmeritz, and here I meet after many years my colleague, Mr. Romanski, who was in the same camps and we knew each other in Gross Rosen and met there together quite frequently; and with the husband of Mrs. Romanska, who is here today -- Zbyszek Romanski and I were friends, and we talked for many hours during the time free from labor in the Gross Rosen camp.

At the beginning I would like to make clear, that I am describing my wartime and concentration camp experiences not for the purpose of inciting any hatred in anyone, or anger, or a desire for revenge. Absolutely not. For a long time, I was unable either to speak or to write on this subject, because there stood before my eyes all the macabre scenes which one saw then, as well as deaths, which took away many of my friends and acquaintances under horrible camp conditions. I was afraid of these memories; I did not want to talk about them.

But time heals wounds, and in the end, we see that it is necessary to touch on this subject, because history repeats itself. History repeats itself especially there, where it is forgotten. We pass it on, to avoid forgetting it and repeating its horrible moments. Some of us (for example, my colleague Romanski) are still in the possession of authentic notes written in the heat of the moment, in the camps, in pencil, already faded today. These historical artifacts should not be allowed to disappear; we have to take care of their conservation.



My narration pertains to my own experiences. As those who survived the concentration camps also know very well, in the same camp, and even during the same time period and commando -- it was possible to have more luck or less, to encounter better or worse conditions and treatment, to survive or to perish. My reminiscences then cannot be related exactly to the fate of other prisoners. Almighty God helped me in these oppressions, and I survived.

I will begin with my youth, which has a connection with the main topic of my story. I come from the region of Sandomierz. Forty some kilometers to the south of Sandomierz, there is a small town called Polaniec, laid out on sandy soil. In the area, there were two or three mills, and at that time there was no factory or work establishment, besides the Ruszcza estate where one could get agricultural work. I remember, that in those difficult times after the first world war, the local small landowners ate bread only on such important feast days like Christmas and Easter, or during the harvest. For everyday meals, there was barszcz and potatoes for breakfast, lunch and supper. Not until somewhat later, around 1937, did construction begin there (for example, the embankments near the Wisla river), which gave people work and better conditions for living. Besides, these people worked very well and the results were very beautiful. Afterwards, industrial centers (COP - Centralny Okreg Przemyslowy) were also built, and the situation was systematically improved.

After finishing elementary school in Polaniec, in 1939 I received my high school diploma in Busko-Zdroj (in the beautiful newly constructed building) and went to the Szkola Glowna Handlowa in Warsaw (Warsaw School of Economics). My parents, who were small farmers, did not have the funds to pay for my tuition, clothes, and room and board. That's why, during the four years of high school, my brother and I earned money for our keep by tutoring for money. I would get up at around 5, no later than 6 in the morning, and I would go to bed after 11 in the evening. During the last two years I was a so-called "Marszalek" (the chairman of chairmen) of the high school. During my college studies in Warsaw, I was able to get a job as the assistant of the secretary in the Union of Agricultural and Economic Cooperatives (Zwiazek Spoldzielni Rolniczych i Zarobkowo-Gospodarczych), with the benefit of being able to do my work during the day or at night, during the work week, as well as on Saturdays and Sundays.

Even before the beginning of my studies I belonged to the Polish Scouting movement, I participated in military preparation, I was interested in various political directions and social problems, trying to find answers to the question, how we should manage our country, in order to improve the welfare of the people. During my college studies, I had many colleagues with various persuasions. There were many forms of the so-called "sanacja" of the former Pilsudski camp, such as Straz Przednia, Legion Mlodych, BBWR, OZON, various shades of the Stronnictwo Narodowe, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Stronnictwo Ludowe. There were some who communized (Jerzy Wuensche, Roman Ujma). There were also a few who usually played cards in the restrooms of the library, and some who were not interested in anything beyond their studies.

I studied two faculties simultaneously: cooperatives and business education; and of the required foreign languages, German and English. I joined the group of friends of the Stronnictwo Ludowe.



In discussions then we searched for the appropriate road to improve the conditions in the country. While still in high school, I read a copy of *Kapital* by Marx, translated into Polish, which I borrowed from the local Jewish library. By such searching around, I came to the conclusion that in Poland we must work out our own way, and I found -- the cooperative movement. Working in the co-op movement, first as the secretary's assistant, and later as an auditor of the agricultural-cooperatives, I made contacts with many people of the Warsaw and Lodz provinces, which helped me very much during WWII in the underground resistance.

Immediately after my studies, I performed my military service in the School of Ensigns of the Cavalry (Szkola Podchorazych Kawalerii) in Grudziadz, and after finishing there, I was assigned to the 21-st Regiment of the Nadwislanski Lancers (21-szy Pulk Ulanow Nadwislanskich) in Rowne Wolynskie, in the Luck province.

During military service in the cavalry military college in Grudziadz, I taught evening courses after service hours about cooperatives for the non-career soldiers in Grudziadz. I organized courses in wheat-product ("zbozowo-towarowe;" purchase, cleaning, milling, revision, storage, sale as well as basic bookkeeping). The point was that after returning to their homes from the army, they could join in the co-op work in their home towns.

That's a broad view of what my prewar past looked like.

## 2. THE WAR OF 1939

During the war in 1939 I was with my regiment in the Lodz Army, in the Wolynska Cavalry Brigade, in the region around the locality of Mokra near Czestochowa. History appraises our battles there very positively.

During the retreat towards Warsaw, my platoon was in the rear guard, that is in shielding formation. Before reaching Warsaw, I received the order to march on Garwolin and further on east for regrouping. But other detachments of my regiment, walking behind us, received an order to remain in the vicinity of Warsaw to defend the capital (I learned about this from the leadership of the regiment after the military actions of 1939 were over). Because Garwolin was already burning, my platoon and I joined in with various detachments of the Army of General Kleeberg-- the grouping of Lieutenant-Colonel Mossor (*Czas Ulanow*, Bohdan Krolkowski, page 217; and we took part in the successful cavalry charge of Cavalry Captain Burtowy (ibid, page 221) at the same time that Lieutenant-Colonel Mossor surrendered to the Germans with the rest of the grouping in the forest near Osuchowo.

The disbanding of our detachment did not take place until the area near Uchnowo or Rawa Ruska at night, when the Germans were attacking us from one side of the forest, and Soviet detachments were attacking from the other side. The order was: bury the weapons and ammunition, give the horses and uniforms to the peasants, change into civilian clothes, march home and await further orders.

Over half of the soldiers of my platoon came from Wolyn. The entire detachment was a well-harmonized group, fought bravely, heroically. The losses in human lives were large. My deputy, a Wolynian, Corporal Szkurski was killed in the first week of the war. I filled the losses in this way, by putting always willing volunteers, stray infantrymen, on

Germans  
& Soviet  
simultaneous  
attack



the horses left by those who were killed. I named as my deputy one of the leaders of the section, a senior lancer. He fulfilled his function very well.

After changing into civilian clothes, groups of people started to form in a loose march towards different directions: to their homes, to nearby relatives and acquaintances. I proposed a march through Hungary or Romania to the Polish Army in France. Two colleagues joined in: one a second lieutenant of the reserve of a different detachment, who was originally from Warsaw, and one ensign of the career school of cavalry. As I recall, his name was Bratkowski or Bartkowski, having finished his second year. We agreed to go to Stanislawow, stay there with a colleague of Bratkowski's and look for a way to cross the border. After a few hours the Russians detained us, and added us to a group of demobilized soldiers headed for Lwow.

After various difficulties we were able to leave the barracks in Lwow and get to the colleague's house in Stanislawow. We were received hospitably, but with fear that the Soviets might find us, because then the whole family was in danger of arrest. After a few days of gathering news, we determined that the Rumanian border was surrounded by the army with dogs, and that crossing the border seemed to be impossible at that time. After about a week, we decided we couldn't place Bratkowski's friend's entire family in danger, we had to return to Warsaw. We reached the new Soviet-German border and there we fell into Germans hands. They packed us into autos and conveyed the entire transport to Radom, where we were unloaded onto an empty field fenced in with barbed wire. During the night, the two of us dug our way out under the barbed wire and fled in the direction of Warsaw.

Sometime towards the end of October 1939, we got to the locality of Pyry near Warsaw. The farmer let us sleep in the barn. The next day we were invited in for breakfast, and they told us about the destruction and lack of food in Warsaw. After breakfast my colleague and I parted company. He went in the direction of his home, and I towards my rented room on Narbutta Street. A friend of mine from studies in the Szkoła Główna Handlowa (Warsaw School of Economics), Hieronim Tatar and I rented one room, two other student acquaintances rented the second room, and the landlords took up the rest of the house. However, it appeared that the landlords had already signed the volksliste, so that after a few days, my colleague Tatar and I moved in with a colleague from school -- Andrzejewski on Mokotowska Street. The two of us took up one room. The rest of the house was occupied by our colleague Andrzejewski, his mother and his elderly grandfather Jakubowski (the mother's father).

### 3. PROFESSIONAL WORK AND THE UNDERGROUND

Immediately the next day after returning to Warsaw, I went to my place of employment, the Związek Spółdzielni Rolniczych i Zarobkowo-Gospodarczych (the Union of Agricultural and Economic Cooperatives) in Warsaw, 11a Warecka Street. The Kasa Spółdzielcza (Cooperative Cashier) occupied the first floor, the second floor was taken up by the Okręg w Warszawie (Warsaw District), the sections Rolniczo-Handlowy, Jajczarsko-Mleczarski (agricultural-commerce and ovo-dairy), as well as the cashiers and Banki Spółdzielcze (Cooperative Banks). The third floor was occupied by the Zarząd Centrali (Central Administration), and the Instytut Spółdzielczy (Cooperative Institute)

25000  
#1  
from Berlin



was on the fourth floor. Many workers "camped out" there with their families, because family members were slowly finding each other.

During the siege of Warsaw food supplies were exhausted, the prices on the black market were very high, and a large part of the populace was starving. Situations were especially difficult in hospitals, children shelters and so on. Many of my co-workers denied themselves part of what were rightfully their own rationed portions to jointly gather food supplies, for example for the hospitals. The director of the section of agricultural-commerce cooperatives was senior colleague Franciszek Kielan, a very honest individual, unusually generous and universally much respected. He convinced the German commissar on cooperative matters in Warsaw to transport food for the employees from the cooperative in Kutno (the largest cooperative in the Warsaw district).

Along with fellow friend Jan Boniuk, we set out for Kutno and brought to Warsaw, to our office, a food-filled ladder wagon harnessed to three horses. Part of the food was designated for hospitals, and the rest was divided according to the number of members in each family, regardless of the employee's position. A majority of the younger co-op employees began to carry food to the hospitals. In this way, I found in the hospital (probably the Ujazdowski Hospital) the leader of my regiment, the 21-st Regiment of the Nadwislanski Lancers from the Wolynska Cavalry Brigade -- Lieutenant-Colonel Kazimierz Rostwosuski, as well as many officers from our regiment and brigade. I have to admit, that from that time on the food situation in the hospital improved very much.

After a certain time, we learned that the officers in the hospital were going to be transported somewhere, and that the Germans were already examining the lists of patients. I had the most acquaintances in the municipal offices in the former Sandomierski district. So I set out on a circuit and brought back as many as possible of clean, unfilled personal identification documents (identity cards) and municipal seals. I brought all these back to Warsaw and handed them over to the reconnaissance liaison from Sluzba Zwyciestwu Polski (SWP - Service for the Victory of Poland). I already belonged at that time to the underground group "Raclawice." After a few days, the sick officers were released from the hospital and directed to an agreed upon residence location. The new identity cards turned out to be very good -- they passed the test.

One day, the wife of Lieutenant-Colonel Rostwosuski contacted my office to let me know not to spend the night at home, because her husband was arrested during a street roundup (lapanka) and would be interrogated by the Gestapo that night. Luckily the next day, she advised me that he had already been released on the basis of a previously issued identity card (as I recall, it was issued to an "agricultural engineer" from an estate somewhere in Podol).

After the end of the September campaign, there began the underground phase of the battle. I was very much engaged in two groups. The first one was the group "Raclawice" belonging to the peoples' movement (most from the pre-war "Siew"). In connection with my work in the co-op movement, I was invited to prepare the statutes and to help with the organizational work of the newly established restaurant in Warsaw, the "Wymiana," on 73 Mokotowska Street. This was only going to be a cover for the "Raclawice" group in its underground resistance work. After a few months there occurred a desconspiration ("wpadka") of a cell of our group in Lublin (from where we received printing paper for the underground press). Using torture, the Germans forced information

manufactured  
ID cards

Restaurant  
Wymiana



about our Warsaw group from the arrested members of that cell, but for now did nothing to us as yet.

One day a friend of mine, with the same first and last name besides (we called him Marian Wojciechowski number one, I was number two) came to me and asked if I could help them in the following matter. Apparently there was for sale an entire printing press hidden from the Germans by one of the printer compositors somewhere in a barn in the countryside. But for this printing press, the compositor wanted money -- which needed to be organized. I didn't promise anything at first, because I didn't have the money, but I began some efforts in that direction. In Rawa Mazowiecka the director of the agricultural cooperative was my friend, Zygmunt Jedlinski. I went to him, explained the situation and asked for help. Over the time interval of several weeks, Zygmunt sent two ladder wagons loaded with food (all the automobiles were requisitioned by the Germans, and for the Poles they were unattainable). The printing press was purchased for the money received from the sale of this food on the black market. This was one of the first printing presses in service of the Polish underground in Warsaw.

The Germans depended very much on the agricultural cooperatives that supplied food for them on location, as well as for the residents of the Reich. Because of this, they wanted to have precise reports and inventories regarding existing cooperatives. The execution of such reports also constituted my work. Traveling around to the cooperatives as an inspector, I had special privileges in buying tickets for busses and trains, of course only in work-related matters. I made the most of these trips to contact other organizations. They were given information, and communiqués, meetings and terms were discussed, and so on.

Springtime 1941 was the date set for the meeting of the representatives of the organization "Raclawice." This meeting was to take place in the cooperative restaurant in Warsaw in the evening. I was going to that meeting from Nowe Miasto near Pilica, where I was staying with my brother after recent surgery on my appendix. At departure, my brother asked me to take along his wife, who was going to visit her family in Sandomierz and continue further on to Polaniec, and was going to have to change trains in Warsaw. I agreed readily and promised to help my sister-in-law to transfer from one train station to the other. Meanwhile, my sister-in-law suddenly got sick on the train, so that in Warsaw, instead of escorting her to the second train station, I took her to my place on the Aleje Niepodleglosci. I brought over a woman doctor acquaintance of mine, brought medicine from the pharmacy and gave it to my sister-in-law. She already felt significantly better. I announced to her that in the evening I was going to the meeting. My sister-in-law began to cry, she didn't know my landlords, they didn't know her, she was afraid to remain by herself without my care. She finally convinced me with this lamenting so much, that I resigned from attending the evening dinner-meeting of the underground organization "Raclawice" in the co-op restaurant. I planned to find out about the details the next day by going there for breakfast.

At five in the morning I received a phone call from my colleague Wegierski (he was my friend from the cooperative and the "konspiracja"), who asked me if I was coming for "breakfast." I answered yes, because I wasn't at the "supper" yesterday, so I should go for "breakfast." And my friend replied: "Better don't go there, because last night there was some poisoning with mushrooms." In our language, "mushroom poisoning" meant deconspiracy or betrayal. It turned out that the Gestapo arrived before

Printing Press  
for Polish  
underground

Germans  
took the  
Poles food



the hour designated for the meeting in the restaurant, and planted all the halls as well as the stairway with its people, both in uniforms and in civilian clothes. And afterwards, they would admitted all incoming guests, but they were not let in. In this way, they arrested about 30 people. From this group of arrested individuals, two women (a cook and her daughter assisting her) survived; all the remaining people died from exhaustion at labor or were executed by shooting -- the men in Auschwitz, the women in Ravensbruck. I would undoubtedly have shared their fate, if not for the fact that my sister-in-law's illness and strong pleas kept me at home.

But I survived luckily for some time afterwards, until the next year, 1942.

Because I was informed that at the Gestapo they are inquiring about Marian Wojciechowski, and I didn't know which one, then I would change residences often (more or less every 4-6 months). The last residence I rented in Warsaw was in Zoliborz, in the housing co-op of musicians -- the landlord of the residence, who also was a Wojciechowski (but Kazimierz) besides, was a musician.

I continued to travel around the General Government region. One day, shortly after the arrests at the restaurant, Kazik Wegierski came to me and announced to me, that he would like me to meet his sister who had just arrived from Lodz. I went to visit them, we talked some, and when the family went to bed, Kazik's sister told me that she has a task for me. She worked in reconnaissance and needed a place near the border of the General Government on the train line Lowicz-Zychlin-Kutno, where couriers crossing the border could stay the night for some rest and a place to sleep. After a few months, her brother advised her to ask me for help. I promised that I would look around. Under the German occupation Warsaw, Sochaczew and Lowicz still belonged to the General Government, however the next train station -- Zychlin -- was already on the side of the Reich, or territory incorporated into Germany. As quarters for the woman courier, Lowicz seemed the best fit to me, especially since I had very good relations there in the local agricultural-commerce co-op. That person was a woman courier of the Polish underground (Kazik's sister from Lodz, Wanda Wegierska). Because of the assignment of the liaison of the Polish underground, she took on German citizenship, traveled quite often across the border into German territory, met there with our intelligence personnel and brought back from them information, among other things including the localization of German armament plants. This information was transmitted from Warsaw to London via radio, to be utilized for bombing raids by the British air force. The woman courier (a young girl, about 18-19 years old) realized at one point in Berlin that she was being followed, and she fled to hide in the hotel. Sometimes even very sensible and brave people sometimes do tragically stupid things. She did just such a stupid thing. Back in the hotel, she wrote several letters, addressed the envelopes and mailed them. One of those letters was addressed to me. The Gestapo intercepted the letters and copied them along with the addresses. The woman courier was arrested in Berlin only after three or four months during her third trip. All the recipients of her letters were also arrested. I had already organized for her a point of transfer, everything was prepared, but unfortunately it was too late.

Sometime during the second half of 1940 or maybe at the beginning of 1941, I believe it was Kazimierz Wegierski himself who came to my office room with his friend and asked me to help him as much as I would be able to, after which he left the room, leaving me alone with his friend. I asked what was it all about? It was about making

Change  
residence  
4-6 months

How far  
into Poland?



contact with people through whom he would be able to acquire smaller or larger quantities of every kind of food. In my travels around the co-ops for inspection, before and even during the occupation -- I knew the remaining stock products of the co-ops, and I tried to get to know people whom I could trust.

Verifying the percent of so called "tluczek" (breakage) of eggs, "rozsyp" (spillage) of flour, cereal or grain, I knew roughly how much and of what it was possible to take away without putting people at risk of suspicion by the German authorities. If there were suspicions about the black market, that was only just half the problem. People were in danger of being thrown out of work, being sent to labor in Germany and so on. However, if there was suspicion that the food was being handed over to partisans or to Jews -- there was the threat of punishment by death, preceded by torturing all suspects and their families. We had to help, but always we had to be cautious. My colleague Wegierski's friend came to me to the office several times, and if I had them -- I always gave him some contacts in the cooperatives of the Warsaw or Radom districts. A contact could be the director of the cooperative, the director of a certain section, the warehouse keeper, the bookkeeper or also even an ordinary laborer who was initiated into the underground.

Only after the war, looking at a photograph in the press, I recognized that friend of my colleague Wegierski. It was Julian Grobelny, founder of the Council to Assist the Jews, "Zegota." During that time he was buying food and was more than likely providing it for Jews.

#### 4. ARRESTED BY THE GESTAPO

I was arrested in Radom, where I had moved, because in Warsaw it was "too tight" for me, the Gestapo were tripping over my heels. In Radom, I resided at the local high school teacher's home (as I recall, his name was Oder). On April 23, 1942, at night, the Gestapo were battering at the door of the house where I lived. At that time I was not at home, and the landlord tried to open and escape through the back door, but they shot him in the leg. His son died from the wounds received during the shooting. The Gestapo inquired about me and found out that I was working in the cooperative. The next day, they went to the office of the Union of Agricultural and Economic Cooperatives, and without mentioning my name, made a general survey of the employees. They made accusations, that the office produced fictional work cards for people who in reality don't work there. Under that pretext, they checked the entire registered personnel "from a to z," what and where a given individual did during a given day. By this method they got to me, and learned at which co-op I was performing an inspection at that point in time. It was in the Wloscianska Agricultural-Commerce Cooperative in Piotrkow Trybunalski. They returned to their headquarters and telephoned the order to arrest me by the local Gestapo. The Gestapo came to the commissar of the cooperative during the dinner hour asking about me. Meanwhile, not expecting anything, I had just had a secret meeting at the cemetery and returned at noon to the co-op bureau. There I found a message that the commissar of the cooperative, a German, wanted to see me in his office. This was nothing unusual, so I calmly went to his bureau, and the Gestapo were already there waiting for me. They checked my personal documents and informed me that I was under arrest. The protestations of the German commissar, who needed my help in the work of



the cooperative, did not help. I was arrested; the Radom Gestapo demanded my immediate transport to Radom. At the moment of the arrest, I had on my person several "trefne" (secret underground) documents, that is, such that should not, under any circumstances, fall into German hands. Handing over my briefcase to a colleague who was my assistant-apprentice, I told him quietly to burn whatever could be damaging to us. Unfortunately, I also had some papers on me in my clothes; I could not get rid of these without attracting the attention of the Gestapo. We arrived in Radom (that was April 24, 1942) around 11 pm at night. And here, fate was kind to me in a most miraculous way.

Now, about a month earlier I was taking the train from Radom to Warsaw. At the train station, using my cooperative inspector's identification card, I could buy a train ticket without having to wait in line (this was no small matter: there were barely 20 tickets available for about 200 people in the queue). At that time, there walked up to me a stranger in the uniform of a prison guard, asking me to help him to buy a ticket: he had received a telegram that his sister in Warsaw is dying and he desperately wanted to visit her (he was going to be busy at work the next day). I like people and I like to help them. Therefore, I agreed, and I bought him a ticket in the next ticket cashier's window to avoid suspicion. And it so happened, that we were passengers in the same train car and chatted with each other a bit.

When, in accordance with their received orders the Gestapo brought me to the Radom prison that night, it was this "acquaintance" from the train station who was the guard on duty!

On the first floor of the prison building there was the criminal section (for prisoners accused of theft, etc.) and on the upper floor, I believe either on the second or third story, there was the political section. After bringing me in, the Gestapo led me to the guard on duty and told him to sign a document that I had been delivered. When he signed the receipt for my person, they left, leaving me in his responsibility. We were left alone, and we began a discussion as to what to do next. My eventual escape would risk reparations against our entire families (his and mine), as well as against my colleagues from work and from home. I felt that it was too dangerous not only for my loved ones, but also for the family of the prison guard. I decided that I do not have the right to put so many people in danger, and I decided not to escape. The guard advised me to destroy anything that was "trefne" (secret underground documents) that I had with me. In the middle of a large hall on the first floor in which we found ourselves, there stood a huge stove (so called "koza") with a fire burning inside. The guard lifted the cover of the stove and said: "Throw it in here." I had with me a notebook with coded names, telephone numbers and addresses. Without knowing the code, it would have been difficult to decode them. However, the Gestapo could come to the conclusion that the information in the notebook is coded, and with additional beatings maybe get that necessary information out of me. Without a moment's hesitation, I took advantage of the "koza" and threw in my notebook along with the rest of the "trefne" papers into the fire.

## **5. INTERROGATION AND TORTURE IN RADOM**

And so I fell into the hands of the Gestapo, but with the exception of what they already knew about me, I did not provide them with any other indications. Everything I possessed was "clean," because anything else had been burned.



During the first few days of my stay at the prison, I received a package with a large pot of buckwheat cereal. The Gestapo checked this cereal rather thoroughly, but fortunately, they did not find the tiny rolled up ball of paper hidden inside it. It contained only the brief piece of information, that the Wegierskis had been arrested with their entire family. I did not receive any additional information: why, who and how. Kazik Wegierski, a scout instructor (I believe from the scout troop "Wigry") was that colleague from work and the underground, who had informed me earlier in Warsaw about the "mushroom poisoning," or "wypadka" (deconspiration of a cell of my underground organization). He was very actively engaged in the Polish underground, and his sister was that courier who traveled to Germany for reconnaissance.

I wasn't sure what the Gestapo already knew or what it didn't know, but just in case, I didn't admit to anything. For the first interrogation, there arrived at the prison a special envoy from German intelligence, who spoke Polish perfectly. As it turned out, he knew Poland, and about two weeks earlier, that is, right before the outbreak of war, he had returned to Germany from a ski trip to Zakopane. He wanted me to tell him everything that I knew about people acquainted with me, where they work, what they do. Naturally, when it came to Wegierski, I pretended not to know anything. At that point, there was not yet any beating or anything of that sort. The person leading the interrogation said, that's too bad, that I don't know anything, and left the prison. About two weeks later at the next interrogation I was beaten so thoroughly, that after finishing they threw me into the cell completely disabled.

Normal interrogation took place in this way, that in the attic of the Gestapo headquarters, they would put handcuff the prisoner's hands in back of him, tie the handcuffs to a rope hanging from the ceiling, and pull the rope upwards so that one would hang above the floor of the attic at the height of an average chair or table. Then, there would take place a beating over the entire body, including the head and legs. A person would be completely covered in blood. Because I was hanging by my hands with the entire weight of my body, and sometimes pulled downwards by my legs, I lost complete use of my fingers and hands already after the second interrogation. It was possible to prick me in the fingers, and I would not be able to feel it. I could not bend my arms at the elbows, so that when eating, for example, a piece of bread, I had to use a spoon, because I could not reach my mouth with my hand. They maltreated me horribly. Luckily, my prison guard acquaintance alerted the persons indicated by me about my imprisonment. These individuals tried to help me through the commissar of the co-op union where I worked, and also through his secretary. As I learned later in the Gross Rosen camp, where I met the son-in-law of my Radom landlords, it was that German woman secretary who suggested that one of the Gestapo (he had a high position and loved to play around) be bribed. Of course, there could in no way be any agreement about my release from prison, but it was about sending me to Auschwitz without a death sentence. Normally in similar incidences the prisoner, after the interrogations were concluded, was executed by shooting in the prison or in nearby forests, or sent to Auschwitz with a death sentence. This sentence was executed by shooting in the camp after a two- or several-month stay. Such a sentence was not sent after me. I was transported to Auschwitz, but all my things were returned to my mother with the announcement of my death. They didn't want to release the body, but they sent a message that I am no longer on this earth.



## 6. AUSCHWITZ

In the camp I met with a series of events that appeared to be miraculous, or perhaps accidental coincidences ordained by the Providence of God. It is difficult for me to say that God wanted to retain my person, because there were so many who were so much better and so much more needed. But it all happened so that I was saved.

I arrived at Auschwitz as a complete human ruin: I could not bend or move my hands. At the camp apels, when the orders "caps off" or "caps on" were issued, I grabbed the cap on my head without feeling it in my fingers. Not obeying the command risked being beaten or even being killed on the spot.

They took me to Block 11, the block of death. Had they learned about my state and that I was unable to work, a death sentence would have been immediate. I was unfit for work, so there was no reason why I should be kept alive. In such a state, I was held in the death block for a day or two. I was hit over the head with a club several times, but after about a week they sent me, in a group of about 20 prisoners, to the kitchen for food, for the afternoon soup. This soup -- a bit of water with something like nettle in it -- and yet hot, was carried on poles in barrels of various dimensions (25, 50 liters) by two prisoners. They sent a few too many people to carry the soup, under the assumption that there would be more barrels. But as it turned out, the barrels were larger and a few of us didn't have to carry anything. I tried to walk in the back, so that they would not choose me when changing carriers, because I knew that I would be unable to carry the barrel. And spilling the soup, especially a barrel of soup -- that would have been death on the spot for certain, for the reckless denial of food for many people. And after all, I could not tell them that I had no feeling in my hands. So I walked in the back of the group of these carriers down a street leading to Block 11, and suddenly I saw a man in front of me, coming closer, also wearing prison garb, but shaped and well-fitting. We got closer to each other and both of us stood: "Marian, is that you?" and I answered, "Zdzisiek, is that you?" It turned out that this was my friend, with whom I shared a room in 1937-1938 at the cavalry training center in Grudziadz for a period of about 9 months. At that time, after military service, I returned to work in the co-op movement, and he remained in the army as a candidate for a career officer. During the occupation, he was rounded up along with all the remaining men on a train on the Krakow-Tarnow line and sent to Auschwitz. Because the man was strong and healthy, he survived the first few months in the camp not all that badly, and then people like that, if they were able to do something, were assigned to various positions in maintaining the camp. My friend Zdzisiek Wroblewski was appointed as the block scribe: he had the responsibility of keeping the prisoners' register up to date, where and what each one was doing at each hour. We briefly recounted to each other our histories; he decided to accompany me. He went with me to my block monitor -- it was a German criminal, who beat and killed people without hesitation; he told him not to do me any harm, because I was his friend.

In about a week, Zdzisiek arranged to have me transferred to his block. I don't know how he did that, but at the new place there were many former colleagues and acquaintances from various political parties and factions, from various universities and various cities. They already had formed an entire underground organization in Auschwitz, and everyone helped each other as much as was possible. Zdzisiek drew me



to him and said that he would make me a "sztubowy." The "sztubowy" was responsible for one large camp ward. I told him that I was not suitable for that function; I saw that a "sztubowy" beats people, hitting them with a ladle wherever it fell. I was not suited for this. Zdzisiek replied, "Listen, this is the way it is here, that either you will beat, or you will be beaten." But I refused; I wanted to be in the middle, not to beat and not to be beaten. So I bounced here and there, working in different commandos in the camp territory.

A typhus epidemic broke out. Two blocks were reserved for the sick. The Germans were not at all that concerned about the prisoners, who were dying in masses from the typhus, but they were afraid of getting infected themselves. Because the prisoner worked in many sections, for example, in the canteens where they had contact with SS-men, they could infect them. One day, two large trucks arrived, onto which were loaded all the people in those two "typhus" blocks: the sick, the reconvalescing and the orderlies. They were all gassed. Less than a week later, I fell ill with typhus myself. My companions in adversity took me arm in arm and led me to the receiving hall for the sick, and then they themselves had to quickly report to work. The doctor in reception, a young Jew fresh after medical studies (probably from Hungary) had already been alerted about my coming by my colleagues or their acquaintances. At that very moment an SS-man appeared. He was an older man, who went about the camp and observed the prisoners, writing down the numbers of those who were working poorly -- as well those who were so weak that they could not work. These numbers were then passed on to the camp registry office. All those recorded prisoners were then immediately murdered in the gas chambers or (more frequently) by injection with phenol. At the moment of the SS-man's arrival, I had already been examined by the doctor, with a filled out health card. The SS-man came up and took my card, and noticed the high fever. Seeing this, and knowing that in a moment my number would be recorded and passed on for execution, the doctor quickly reported: "High fever, for observation." In the Auschwitz camp, on Block 10, there were performed various types of observations and medical experiments. German doctors inoculated male and female prisoners with bacteria of various diseases, performed research and observations, and then of course they killed the subjects. In connection with this, the visiting SS-man understood that I would be sent there for observation; he put away his notebook and did not record my number. At that time, I was already semiconscious.

Next, they sent me to a newly-opened "revier" for those who were sick with typhus. I was visited there by my friend and one of the leaders of the conspiracy -- Kazimierz Wegierski, who was arrested even earlier than I. During his interrogation, the Gestapo beat him so severely that his kidneys, liver and other internal organs were damaged. As a result, this very slender man was so badly swollen that I could not recognize him. He died the next day, without betraying anyone to the very end. From the entire group that was arrested along with him, not one person broke under cruel interrogation, no one was betrayed. His sister, Wanda Wegierska, caught by the Germans and accused of spying, was sentenced to death and executed by beheading in the prison in Berlin. Working for the Polish intelligence, she presented herself as a German citizen and that type of death was administered to her. For her achievements in the underground resistance movement, she received the Virtuti Military Cross posthumously after the war,



and was also promoted to the rank of second lieutenant. She was the woman courier about whom I spoke earlier at the beginning of my lecture.

After getting well, I was sent back to the block of my friend Zdzisiek, who started to look for work for me. He found for me the position of bookkeeper for a German civilian -- an engineer, assigned to supervise the storage of building and construction materials intended for the camp, as well as for military objectives. At the Auschwitz camp there was a main warehouse of that type. At the beginning, we observed each other; on the third day of such an acquaintance, the engineer placed a piece of bread with marmalade on my table, and later we began to talk with each other. Of course, I did not admit to my underground connections. Our conversations were held cautiously and only inside the building. The German warned me that if our contacts were revealed, then he would become a prisoner like myself, and I would end up in the crematorium. We worked together, we exchanged words of greeting, the relationship between us was arranged on a level plane of not so much as work colleague or friend, but human being nonetheless.

After about two weeks, my work was changed: at the Sunday morning apel, I was assigned along with about a hundred other prisoners to clean the overgrown drainage ditches outside the camp. Standing on the bottom of the ditch with water up to the knees, one had to deepen the trench and hand the soil up to people located higher. The work assigned to me was at the bottom of the ditch, and any kind of protest would of course risk a beating. At that time I already had enough feeling in my hands so that I could hold a shovel, but my fingers were still not fully functional (moreover, that condition has persisted till this day). I worked this way for a full day; it was already the middle of November, the water was very cold. After returning to the camp I was shaking with the cold, but the next day I went to do the same work, not saying anything to the German engineer with whom I had worked previously. After the second day of working in the ditches, I got a very high fever during the night, and they took me for a medical examination. It was pure luck that there were Polish doctors there, who, even though they had no medicines, were able to do advice what to do. They diagnosed pneumonia, pleurisy, water in the side as well as inflammation of the kidneys. They had no medicinal supplies, because people were held in the camp to be finished off, completely without any care as to their medical treatment. And once again, I met with Divine Providence. In this so-called hospital to which I was taken, there worked a prisoner -- called the block tailor, who had been arrested along with one of my friends. This friend, like me, was a recipient of one of the letters from our woman courier, which had been intercepted by the Gestapo. The Gestapo came for him at his place of work -- a tailor shop on Wiejska Street right nearby the Sejm. He was arrested along with other workers. A handy tailor from just that group by the name of Wladek Dabrowski was presently in Auschwitz. He performed a series of tailoring tasks for the camp "dignitaries" -- the functionaries and the SS-men. Wladek and I recognized each other and he helped me in the treatment. Once again, God showed His mercy. How was I treated? They cut off a small barrel and installed heating elements in the form of several light bulbs. They would place me on blankets on the ground, they would place the so "armed" barrel on my chest, and they would connect the electrical wire conduit to the electrical contact. After a half hour of such heating, I was almost unconscious, but the blanket on which I was laying was completely wet from the water coming out from within my body. Besides this, the water from my side was



extracted with the help of a syringe. When the SS-man who was writing down the numbers of the prisoners for execution, because they were very sick and not fit for work, would draw near us, a well-organized camp intelligence would warn us ahead of time. Then I would be pulled out of bed, wrapped in a blanket and placed on the ground by a wall. That was done with prisoners who had already died, because at the morning, afternoon and evening apels every man in every block had to be accounted for. After the SS-man left, my friend the tailor, along with his friends, put me back into bed. This would be repeated during my entire stay at the hospital.

Meanwhile on the block to which I belonged, Zdzisiek had a fatal fallout. He organized contacts from outside the camp for the purpose of bringing in medicines for so many sick prisoners. This was realized in the following way: Some of the specialists (for example, welders, plumbers, and so on) needed in the camp were imported as civilian workers from outside the camp. Zdzisiek would pass on a list of needed medicines to them, which they would bring to the camp at the next opportunity. One of those workers was caught with such a list during inspection, and under torture revealed who had given it to him. Zdzisiek was arrested immediately along with the two "sztubowy" who were responsible for the wards which Zdzisiek frequented most. Despite the tortures, all three did not betray anyone and did not admit to anything; they all perished either from starvation, or by phenol injection. Had it not been for my stay in the hospital, because I was so closely connected to them, I would have probably been also taken, tortured and bestially murdered.

I stayed in the hospital until the moment that my fever dropped, then I had to go back to work. I was released from the hospital one Sunday and assigned to a different block. This was the block of the so-called "Zugange" (prisoners newly-arrived to the camp as well as prisoners discharged from the hospital). The ward of the block I was assigned to was located on the first floor; I was so exhausted by the illness, that I would walk up the wide stairs on all fours. I had a card of discharge from the hospital and was assigned to work the next day. This time the work consisted of arranging in layers boards, still wet, freshly brought in from the mill, in tall stacks with some air draft to dry the boards. To accomplish this, some of the workers had to climb upwards and pull up heavy boards handed up from below. I barely managed to drag myself to the place of work; I was assigned the work at the top, but I lacked the strength to climb up the stack. Even if I had been able to do so, with the frosty weather (and it was about the middle of January) I would undoubtedly have frozen to death or, unable to climb down, would have been pushed off to the ground, breaking my bones. I thought to myself then, there is no point in climbing up, better let them kill me here on the ground and it will be the end of it. I decided not to go to the top of the stack -- this was a refusal to work, which in the camp meant inevitable death.

At that time there was in Auschwitz an obercapo of the Bauhoff (building section), a German criminal prisoner known as "Bloody August," who was renowned for his cruelty. Tall, thin, with long hands like an ape. It was enough for him to smack a prisoner with such a hand, to make a corpse out of him. I suddenly saw that "Bloody August" from a distance of about 10 meters. I thought that this is the end of me; but he suddenly became interested in someone else, jumped to the side and reached him, getting further away from me. However, the other person accompanying him came up to me. Normally, a prisoner of the concentration camp when approached by anyone from the



camp administration, was obligated to take off his cap and stand at attention. I did not do this; it was a matter of complete indifference to me whether they would kill me or not. The person approaching me noticed that, came up closer, looked at me and said in German: "Marian, is that you?" I recognized that it was the German engineer, for whom I had worked as a bookkeeper. He asked what I was doing here, why I didn't come to him to work. I answered, that they assigned me to different work, that I had been in the hospital and then they told me to report to the present work site. I added, that I could not perform the work, because I did not have the strength to do it, therefore because of that they will kill me. The engineer looked at me and told me to come with him. He took me to a huge storage place for pipes and other plumbing parts. Outside the building there were all kinds of concrete pipes, and inside there were copper and nickel pipes, as well as all sorts of joints for pipes. The director of this whole warehouse was a prisoner from Stalowa Wola, engineer Sledziewski or maybe Sledzinski. The German led me to him and said that he is leaving me with him as his responsibility, turned around and left. Sledziewski knew nothing about me, but he saw that I was barely able to stand on my feet. He told me to sit down, brought me a piece of bread, pointed to the hot water for bread soup. And I sat like that next to him, by the hot stove, not doing anything for about two or three days. Under camp conditions this was something completely unheard of and meant inevitable death. Soon we began to talk with each other; I told him everything about myself honestly. When I had rested some, I started to help him more and more. I worked in this way to approximately the middle of March, 1943, when the transfer of prisoners from Auschwitz to other camps was begun, because the Auschwitz camp was already overloaded.

## 7. GROSS ROSEN - ROGOZNICA

I was sent to the camp in Gross Rosen. The stay in Gross Rosen began as usual with a quarantine. Even before it was over, I was sent to Hirshberg (today, Jelenia Gora) to work on the construction of a factory to make products from wood fibers. The task of the workers was construction of timbering for cement walls. I volunteered as a carpenter, trying to avoid work with sand or cement, where one had to work full speed running with wheelbarrows filled with sand or cement; with this, one received a lot of lashes. The work of a carpenter, requiring precision in matching timber or boards, was slower. Later, I was even appointed the secretary of the entire group, because it turned out that the former candidate for the position was unable to write well, and quickly. So I held the position of carpenter and secretary until about November, when they brought us from Hirschberg back to the mother camp of Gross Rosen. There I was again employed as a carpenter in the construction of new barracks. One had to work very fast, because everyday there arrived new transports of thousands of prisoners pulled from many other camps (from Majdanek and others). In the construction of the barracks there were used ready-made slabs which had to be put together, next the windows were mounted, and also finishing work was performed. Part of the work was done in the interiors, where it was hot, and for other types of work one had to run, and fast at that, outside. Under these conditions I caught a very severe cold, I was close to pneumonia, I had trouble with breathing and speaking. My colleagues decided to help me, taking me to the "revier" where I could rest. I stayed there, and already on the second day there came to my bed the



"revier" kapo by the name of Siehsdumich and started a conversation with me. I told him a bit of this and that about myself, of course hiding my activity in the underground; he asked me from where do I know German so well, and learning about my education he proposed a more responsible job. He suggested a project employing me in the camp post office, in the parcel section. This change suited me very much and I began the new work of receiving and delivering parcels.

Some time later there came to Gross Rosen a transport of prisoners from Majdanek. Right after that, a few weeks later, this was followed by a large shipment from Majdanek of food parcels which had been sent to these prisoners by their families. The director of the post office, SS Unterscharfurer Layer, decided to send the packages back to the families, because some of the addresses were no longer current. The parcels were delivered to the prisoners in accordance with their prisoner number as well as the number of the block in which they slept and ate. The first and last names of the prisoners were not important, it was only those numbers that mattered. However, after arrival in Gross Rosen from Majdanek, prisoners were located in a new block and received a new prisoner number, so that finding the original addressees among so many thousands of prisoners was unusually complicated. Therefore, the director of the post office decided to send back the entire transport of parcels to the senders. I knew that with the hunger prevailing in the camp, the return of the food packages constituted a huge loss; in addition, the families of the prisoners receiving the returns will be convinced that the addressees were dead. This type of explanation would not be effective with the director of the post office, who was an SS-man. Certainly he was not concerned with the hunger of the prisoners and the pain of the families. I decided then, to propose other arguments to him. I told him that returning the packages places an additional burden on the communication centers, whose main purpose should be services for the German populace and armed forces. I cited the slogan placed on German trains: "Die Rader rollen fur den Sieg" ("The wheels are rolling for victory.") With this I convinced the German, who asked me for advice what to do, because it would be difficult to just distribute the packages at random. I offered to help: if I received permission from the commandant of the camp and his deputy (Raportfuhrer Eschner) to spend additional hours during the week working in the camp chancellery after normal work hours, then I would attempt to find the addressees of the parcels, by comparing their former registered numbers with the currently assigned numbers, as well as searching for the block in which they were presently residing.

In the camp registry office, there were card index files of the mother camp Gross Rosen and all the subcamps of this region, all living and dead prisoners with their new numbers, occupation, and cause of death in case the prisoners were no longer alive. After receiving the consent of the camp authorities, I spent the next week working additionally until about 11 or 12 at night, in search of the owners of the parcels. The beginning was the hardest, that is, finding the first few. Next, those who were found helped me to find the next addressees. And in this way during the week we unloaded the entire shipment of parcels, additionally earning the confidence of the director of the post office, SS-man Layer, and of Raportfuhrer Eschner with this work well done.

Shortly thereafter, this SS-man's goodwill, earned in this way, became very useful to me. For one of the prisoners, it pains me to say -- a Pole (he currently resides in Warsaw), supplemented his food rations by stealing the best foodstuffs from some of the



packages, for example, pieces of sausage. Noticing this process, of course I did not denounce him, but I sharply called his attention to it to have him stop doing this. I even threatened him, that the next time this offense occurred, he would receive from me a healthy lesson. The angry prisoner, along with another Polish "volksdeutch," wrote a denunciation about me, that I was taking advantage of my work at the post office to send letters outside the camp, even though I was under the so-called "Postsperre" (forbidden to write letters, and to receive letters and packages). I knew nothing about this denunciation. One day, when I arrived at work, the SS-man, director of the post office Unterscharfuhrer, called me to his office and told me from whom and what kind of denunciation was deposed about me. The main chief of the political section of the camp, representing the highest authority of the Gestapo in the camp, came to him to verify this and to eventually take me in for interrogation. "My" SS-man supervisor guaranteed that it was not true, that I am a very good worker, and that the denunciation was probably caused by jealousy. In the conversation with me he added, that he was not asking me if the accusation is true, but warned me not to do anything like that, and also not to mention our conversation to anyone. This SS-man saved my life then, because the denunciation about me was true. Of course, having correspondence forbidden to me (camp authorities ordered such types of prohibition concerning certain dangerous prisoners), I would occasionally send letters, availing myself of the kindness of my colleagues, who were able to write once or twice a month to their loved ones. From time to time (for example, once a year) they would give up one of their own letters so I could send one of my own, signed with their name and number (and to these same numbers there could also come a reply to me from my family, which they then transmitted to me later).

Luckily, the matter of the denunciation ended on this note without any consequences. Additionally in my favor there was also the following fact from the recent work time spent building the warehouse in Hirschberg. Due to intervention from the International Red Cross to the highest German authorities in Berlin, it was demanded that all prisoners receive the order one Sunday to write a letter home. I reflected on what I should do. Since I had the "Postsperre" (under penalty of death, it was forbidden to send out or receive any kind of correspondence or parcel, which effectively made the prisoner "dead" to the outside world), I delayed with writing the letter, in fear of the consequences. So I went to the commandant of the subcamp Hirschberg and asked what I should do. After coming to an agreement with the main camp, he said that the prohibition is binding and that I am not allowed to write. This proof of subordination was registered in my records, and also helped me to survive in face of the denunciation.

A group of prisoners from Majdanek, who received food parcels thanks to my work, was most grateful to me. Hunger ruled in the camp; food parcels were unbelievably valuable. They invited me most warmly for a tasty treat, but I declined -- not accepting even a piece from anyone. At that time, I worked inside the building and not that hard, so it wasn't very bad for me; if they wanted to, then they could share the food products with their friends and colleagues. Helping my colleagues I saw as my duty, without accepting even the smallest payment, not even in the form of food.



## 8. LEITMERITZ

In January 1945, the German-Russian battles already moved to the west of Wroclaw. The prisoners were transported by train and on foot to the west. As I recall, on the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1945 there occurred the final liquidation of the concentration camp Gross Rosen. They loaded us on various uncovered train cars (for example, coal cars). They packed as many of us as possible into each train car, putting in one or two SS-men with machine guns. All prisoners were told to kneel or to sit, and whoever raised himself or stood up was immediately shot. The train drew near several locations where there were concentration camps, but they were already overfilled. On some stops, the bodies of dead prisoners were removed from the wagons. Finally we reached Flossenburg, and from there the subcamp Leitmeritz. It was a camp of murderous labor in digging tunnels into the rock walls, into which were then placed machines to produce armaments and ammunition. The mountains protected the production against bombing explosions. Those prisoners who were still alive in the last few train cars, where I also found myself, received orders to take the corpses out of the wagons outside, and lay them out on the embankments along the railroad tracks. This caused a considerable delay in entering the camp itself. Walking in through the gate, I heard someone calling my name. It turned out that they were the former prisoners of the Majdanek camp, and later Gross Rosen, whose parcels from their families I had rescued in Gross Rosen, with that additional night work in the camp registry office.

After the quarantine, the entire transport of prisoners was sent to set up camp Leitmeritz, and many of them now occupied good positions (for example, as functionaries of the camp's firefighting service). Out of gratitude, they fed me and my colleagues, assigned me a bed to sleep on (many of the prisoners slept two or three on one bed or on the ground) and arranged work for me outside the main camp, under good conditions, at the construction of a house for the camp commandant. Because the German criminal prisoners, and especially those so-called "kapo," had already been dismissed by then from the camps, and after a short training were sent to the eastern front, they made me the "kapo" of that group. I chose the following individuals for the group:

- (1) Kazimierz Wisniewski, former student of the Szkoła Glowna Handlowa in Warsaw (Warsaw School of Economics), still sick after typhus.
- (2) Jerzy Cesarski, pre-war activist of the PPS (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna) and an active member of the underground.
- (3) A German (whose name I do not remember) "kapo" of the electricians in the commando "Steinbruch," the exploitation of the quarries in camp Gross Rosen. He was known for secretly constructing a radio receiver together with a few Poles and Germans; they jointly listened to the radio broadcasts from London and also news about the situation of battles on the fronts, and passed them on by word of mouth to their colleagues in the camp, by which they really raised their hopes for surviving. And that was a great deal. Caught red-handed listening to this radio, despite terrible beatings and other tortures, he did not betray anyone, taking the entire responsibility on himself. The liquidation of camp Gross Rosen probably saved him from death.



One evening, a group of Polish colleagues at work digging the tunnel, reported to me -- explaining, that the German supervisor working there, who murdered people at work, had already promised one Pole that he would finish him off the next day. This Pole, already sentenced for extermination, was engineer Dr. Henryk Stankiewicz, docent lecturer of the Warsaw Politechnical School (as I recall, before the war he specialized in research on the endurance of building materials). Because I could not take more than three people to work, I had to release someone in order to take in Stankiewicz. I decided to dismiss Jerzy Cesarski, who scolded me terribly, that I was sacrificing a political activist in favor of some kind of engineer. Fortunately, both survived and both returned to Poland. On a marginal note on this matter, I will only add that as I recall, the 68-year old SS-man who watched us, of Czech origin, and who knew the Czech, German, Russian and even the Polish language rather well, stated to us at the very beginning, that in his presence we can say whatever we like about Hitler and the Germans, but if his wife or his daughters arrived, we were not allowed to say anything, because they were real Germans and would immediately report this fact to the Gestapo.

To build the house for the commandant of the camp (it was already under roofing) we had absolutely no materials and no desire. We spent our whole time looking for wood remnants nearby, which we exchanged with the local residents for a beet, a turnip, a few potatoes, or a piece of bread. From these products we would make a soup, which we shared honestly with our guard. This commando was kept for me for a long time, so that I think that it was due to the gratitude shown me for that time in Gross Rosen. I have great respect and gratitude for my colleagues.

## 9. ESCAPE FROM THE TRANSPORT ON FOOT

In the months of March and April 1945, the Russian armies were pressing to the west. One could hear in the distance somewhere the bombs bursting and the cannonade of the artillery. All work outside the barbed wire of the camp was halted, and also within our commando. Whole columns of prisoners were prepared to march out one after the other somewhere to the west. On May 5, 1945, my colleagues Wisniewski and Stankiewicz, and I were included in such a column marching on foot. In the camp it was already a public secret, that the prisoners in the transports on foot, who no longer had the strength to continue further, were finished off with a rifle shot and left by the roadside to be buried by the local residents. Long marches, often without food and water, left numerous victims. Therefore, at the first occasion during the night, walking through a dense forest, at a given password all three of us jumped into the roadside thicket. We waited until the entire column passed us and then we hid ourselves in even thicker shrubs and waited for sunrise. In the morning, we turned into the first forest path crossing, which led us to a Czech village, where we were greeted very, very hospitably. Bathed, fed and dressed in clean undergarments, and in clean albeit old clothes, we finally felt like human beings. The Czechs informed us that the Russian armies were already in Prague (or in the vicinity of Prague), and the American armies were in the area of Pilzno. While still in the concentration camps, we all knew about the fate of the Polish officers at Katyn. The German press made this known, and it was confirmed by the Polish underground press, with the exception of procommunist gazettes. We already knew about the mass arrests of Poles on territories taken over by Russia and of their transports under terrible conditions



to Siberia. We already knew what would be waiting for us there, if we believed in the communist prattle and headed east. That's why we had already planned earlier to head west. The roads were already obstructed with German deserters and other nationalities in all directions. Almost everywhere there were organized kitchens for the fugitives. Without greater obstacles, we made it to the vicinity of Pilzno. There, on the main road to Germany, we were stopped by an American patrol. Only those who had documents proving that they resided in the west were allowed to go on. Residents of Central and Eastern Europe were to return to their homes. The three of us went off to the side to consult on what to do. A young Czech boy was listening in on our conversation. Apparently he understood our situation, because he informed us that he could show us where to cross the border. He returned with us part of the way towards the village, then turned off to the side through the field boundary strips, in the direction of some small shrubs and thickets, and said that beyond those shrubs we would reach a grove, and beyond that would be Germany. That's how we made it to the German locality in the area of Schwandorf, and then further on to the town of Amberg, where a Polish DP (Displaced Persons) camp was being formed. There the commandant of the camp, a prisoner of concentration camps, a major in the AK (Armia Krajowa - Polish Home Army), Wojcik (Jozef was his first name, I think) greeted us, and in a pleasant, friendly new-camp atmosphere we slowly regained our old selves mentally and physically, after the tragic experiences of the preceding years. The nightmare of German concentration camps still remained in our subconsciousness for decades and even now after more than fifty years of freedom, sometimes I wake up from a terrible dream and I see the silent pleading eyes of my friends standing in front of the camp administration office in Gross Rosen, under the guard of SS-men, I hear the shots into the back of their skulls; and I sense and I see in the dream the black cloud of smoke weaving lazily out of the crematorium. Those who survived this hell did not speak of it for a long time. But it is necessary to talk about it, so that the memory will not be obliterated, so that the history of the Polish Holocaust will not be further falsified.

## **10. THE POLISH CIVILIAN GUARD**

In August and September 1945, the news spread around in Amberg that:

- (1) the Polish DP camp in Amberg would be transferred to a larger camp in Wildflecken,
- (2) the Americans were organizing the Polish Civilian Guard and Transitional Training Camps.

The commandant of our camp, Major Jozef Wojcik, became the commandant of one of such camps (Wincer) and asked me to help in enrolling participants. I traveled around the DP camps, made speeches and kept sending to Wincer even more candidates for the Civilian Guard. Finally, late in the autumn of 1945, I also went through a period of training as a second lieutenant, and at the beginning of 1946, our Civilian Guard company was sent into service at Bad Aibling (near Rosenheim by Munich). As I recall, there were three of our companies all together. We performed our duty by guarding German POWs; mechanical vehicles and their spare parts; and stores of weapons, ammunition, etc. In the summer of 1946, they transferred our company for repeat short



training do Mannheim Kafertal. There I found many young officers and soldiers whom I knew from my college years, my military service and during my professional work. I became friends with the deputy of the leader of the Civilian Guard of the American Army, Lieutenant-Colonel Wladyslaw Rylko, and he, knowing that I am a member of the cooperative movement, asked me for help in organizing co-ops in the Civilian Guard companies. I began work on preparing the statutes as well as the accounting forms and cash settlements. However, since part of the company to which I was assigned was transferred to Buttelborn near Gross Gerau in the vicinity of Darmstadt, in order to guard the warehouses of automobile parts and automotive service columns, I went along with them. After a few days in Buttelborn, I became aware of two things:

- (1) the members of the companies and their families were still somewhat hungry;
- (2) the American army would employ the Civilian Guard only for as long as they needed us. In case of dismissal, our soldiers will go looking for work in Germany or through emigration, without possessing any practical professional skills.

I resolved to do something to remedy both these cases. Regarding the suffering due to hunger, I again started up the company cooperative, making the bookkeeping, the accounting, and the periodical rights of control by members (the auditing committee) more efficient. Regarding the guardsmen's lack of professional skills, I held a meeting of the soldiers and asked them, who would like to learn which profession. Next, I applied to the local village resident Germans individually, owners of trade workshops, with a request to accept our candidates for training in the profession. In this way I was able to accommodate all who wanted to learn. Next, I sat down with my friend, the leader of the company, Captain Roman Wcislo-Winnicki, to work out the scheduling of guard service for afternoon or evening hours, so that those who wanted to learn could go to work during the day in the trade workshops and learn the trade skills. With the help of the educational officer of our center, Captain Jerzy Wilski (my colleague from the concentration camp Gross Rosen), a scouting instructor before the war, we founded clubs for soccer, basketball, volleyball, and an educational club with a handy reference library and so on. The work came out just fine. It was time to think about myself, too. Lieutenant-Colonel Wladyslaw Rylko suggested that I transfer to the center of civilian guard training in Mannheim Kafertal. I applied to the University (Wirtschaftshochschule) in Mannheim for admission to studies and to work on a doctorate in economics (Wirtschaftswissenschaft). They accepted me and assigned study subjects and an amount of time for two semesters, that is, with a possibility of finishing studies in one year. Unfortunately, just after I passed the examinations for the first doctoral semester, I was dismissed from the Civilian Guard of the American army in the summer of 1947 (Reduction In Force). Because this was equivalent to depriving me of financial resources for me and my entire family (wife and daughter), I had to resign from further studies. Luckily, before the dismissal, and with a greater cooperation of a special co-op committee, I was able to work out the statutes, bookkeeping, and plant the seed of trade courses in very many guard companies, so that the Civilian Guard of the American Army could rightly be proud of beautiful attainments in education, culture, profession, charity and finances -- and always in the spirit of the true independence of Poland.



During the autumn of 1947, I moved with my family to the Polish DP camp in Hohenfels (Lechow) near Regensburg, where I was drawn immediately into collaborative work with a circle of farmers; and I began lectures on economics and accounting subjects. After a few months, they offered me a position with the chief Polish organization in the American-occupied zone in Germany, called "Zjednoczenie Polskie" ("Polish Union") with headquarters in Regensburg - Brunnleite 7. But that is a completely different topic.

### 11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, WHICH WAS NOT PRESENTED AT THE DISCUSSION CLUB

Due to lack of time and the huge amount of material to discuss, I did not touch on many details. Having that opportunity presently, I would like to complete some of the topics in short fashion.

While working in the post office in Gross Rosen in parcel reception, I was also on a block with other prisoners working at the camp registry office, such as:

In the Political Section, which settled prisoner affairs in the course of further interrogations (and torture!), verified the records of prisoners sentenced to death, kept under surveillance those prisoners suspected of enemy anti-Nazi propaganda or even anti-camp, and hunted after secret underground organizations in the same camp, as well as checked every so often whether prisoners with death sentences were really executed (by phenol injections, gassing or shooting).

In the Labor Section, which located and controlled the status of prisoners in all commandos of the mother camp Gross Rosen and in all its subcamps.

In the Camp Enlargement Section.

In the Post Office Section, and so forth.

However, the most important was the Political Section and the Labor Section. It depended on them whether one would eventually survive the camp or not.

In periods free from work tasks, there were many occasions for conversations between prisoners on various topics, discrete exchanges of opinions, getting to know each other. The highest prominent of the not very numerous Polish group in the camp registry office was Jan Dolinski, a political prisoner who spoke German excellently, but who did not blindly serve the Germans. He did what he had to. He was polite but he kept his distance. In the group of foreigners, a young Ukrainian from the Polish territories, Antoni Kaminski attracted attention (he was friendly, but something told me to avoid him); and also a tall, stout, middle-aged resident of Belgium or Denmark (I don't remember exactly), with whom I quickly formed a friendship (unfortunately, I don't remember his name either). After a short time he told me, that he worked in the Political Section of the camp (Politische Abteilung), that I am on the list of prisoners who are under surveillance at least once a month without knowing about it -- by other prisoners, mostly Germans. He gave me the name of my "guardian angel," warning me not to give away that I know anything about it. Such a prisoner-spy would try to make friends, would bring up certain questions during a conversation, such as who will win the war, who is losing the war, why and whom do I wish victory, what was my attitude towards the communists, and of course the whole time he would agree with my opinions. Afterwards the entire content of that conversation would be reported where he was so told. The information from this



Belgian protected me from painful consequences and increased my vigilance and caution in pronouncements to strangers. Shortly after the first warnings, "my" Belgian told me that he has access to a list of individuals of Polish nationality, who, after interrogation by Gestapo in various cities are sent to the camp in Gross Rosen. but with a sentence of death. These individuals after a few months were called to the Political Section; after their identity had been verified, they were made to stand at attention before the camp administration office, until a designated SS-man would lead them to the crematorium and there kill them with a phenol injection, gas or a bullet. Then on the prisoner's card file in the camp registry office would be noted the date and the letters "ABE" which meant "Auf Befehl Erschossen" -- shot on orders.

Because Polish names are difficult to remember for foreigners, the Belgian prepared a short list with the names of the new Polish prisoners that were under a sentence of death. On one of the first lists was the name Antoni Suchon, the my younger brother's friend from the Stopnica high school. I had already met with him before in camp. During the German occupation he belonged to the peoples' movement and was a member of the underground organization. One day, a meeting of that organization was scheduled in a village during a dance party. The Germans surrounded all the participants, and Suchon had with him a loaded revolver, which he tossed out unnoticed. The Germans found the revolver, and in order not to put the others in jeopardy of interrogation, torture and maybe even death, he himself confessed during the search that it was he who tossed the gun and that the weapon is his. All were set free, and after interrogation he was sent to camp Gross Rosen with a death sentence.

The camp in Gross Rosen had many subcamps. In some of them mortality was so high, that rarely were prisoners transferred from them to the mother camp in Gross Rosen in order to execute death sentences. Usually the prisoners died themselves from exhaustion or poisoning (for example from the exhaust fumes in the factory of poison gases). The director of the Labor Section was a small, slender, middle-aged hunchback "Krieger," who wore the pink triangle (pederast). For a piece of cake, bacon, lard or onion, he agreed to send -- without any publicizing -- a Polish prisoner to a subcamp designated by me. In this way the lives of certain worthy people were saved. Unfortunately, I was unable to save the live of my younger (he was about 26 years old) colleague Antoni Suchon. After several months, during the afternoon apel, I noticed him standing at attention before the administration office. He didn't look too badly, he was calm, resigned. Already next to him stood the SS-man who was to lead him to the crematorium for execution. I wept for Antoni like a child.

Unfortunately one day, probably already in autumn of 1944, as I was returning from work for the afternoon apel, I noticed my friend the Belgian standing at attention in front of the camp administration office. I walked slowly across to the other side of the camp street and looked at him. He also looked at me and with his head signaled "no." I understood: he did not betray anyone. Someone denounced him and the SS searched his pockets when leaving work and found some names. He was handed over to the penal company of the horrible murderer "Vogel." My friends and I had to put in a lot of effort, and live through much fear, to save "my" Belgian as well as another of my friends from college years, Stanislaw Dziadus. Dziadus, who was sent from Gross Rosen to the subcamp in Biedrusk near Poznan, escaped from there and was caught by the Gestapo and returned to camp Gross Rosen. We were able to arrange that he would not be killed,



only sent to the penal block. Since the camp in Gross Rosen was overloaded with prisoners, they were sending transports to other camps, located further west. For a bit more cake, bacon and other items received from colleagues, we were able to include our friend the Belgian and Stas Dziadus (later, a doctor and peoples' activist in Poland) on the list of participants of the transport and give them provisions for the trip.

## 12. DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE POLISH HOLOCAUST

For almost fifty years after the attack of Germany and the Soviets on Poland and after the experiences in the concentration camps, I was unable to withstand the psychological stress involved in discussing or even listening to conversations on the subject of the terrible effects of the war, and above all the results of Gestapo rule. I had a nervous breakdown and burst out in bitter weeping on the stand while testifying in the federal case in Chicago regarding the deportation of a former SS-man from Gross Rosen, Reinhold Kulle, which took place in the years 1983-1984.

But I was also aware of the fact that the recording of experiences of former prisoners of German and Soviet concentration camps is a necessity to preserve historical truth -- and I slowly began to control myself, and to speak on those subjects.

And so, on September 1, 1989 on the fiftieth anniversary of the attack of Germany and the Soviets on Poland and the outbreak of WWII, two television stations (Channel 11 and Channel 13) in Toledo, Ohio, and also the locally well-known and widely-read daily newspaper, *The Blade*, came to me with a request for an interview.

The matter of the Polish Holocaust and my wartime experiences was widely commented on the two TV stations and written up in an interesting, lengthy article of the major local press. The local Polish American Congress (of which I was vice-president) arranged a solemn observance of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on Poland in the local theater located in the old Polish neighborhood, where Rev. Chaplain George Rinkowski presented his war history and experiences, and I presented my own experiences -- my Polish Holocaust. In September of 1989, an instructor (Applied Economics) in the high school in Maumee, Ohio, also asked me to lecture on the subject of differences between capitalism and communism.

In October 1989, Mr. Dale Schroeder of Monroe, Michigan invited me to speak about my experiences during the war to the members at a dinner meeting of the local Kiwanis Club. My lecture also appeared in the local gazette, the *The Monroe Evening News*.

In December 1989, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, the US Representative from Toledo and herself of Polish heritage, a very well-known, loved and respected person, organized for middle-school students a memorial observance of the Holocaust at the University of Toledo Urban Affairs Center, with the participation of ethnic groups. I was the lecturer from the Polish group.

The terminal illness and death of my late wife, Wladyslawa (who, with her parents and two brothers had already been arrested on January 18, 1940, and whose brother was murdered in a mass execution at Palmiry, and her father at Auschwitz) interrupted my thoughts about the Polish Holocaust.

Only towards the beginning of 1995 did I accept an invitation from the high school in Oak Harbor, Ohio (from teachers Mr. & Mrs. S. Kirian) for a chat about my



experiences in the concentration camps (it was also recorded on videotape). The children listened with great interest.

If I remember correctly, on October 15, 1995 there was a solemn Mass (on the occasion of the annual meeting) at the American Czystochowa in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, in the intention of those who were deceased and those who survived the German and Soviet concentration camps. We set out there together with my friend Albert Ziegler, who is of Jewish heritage. Because Al did not speak Polish, I was his interpreter. The Poles present at the meeting greeted Ziegler very cordially. There weren't even the slightest missteps or shortcomings. They even asked him to light a candle during Holy Mass, in memory of the Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

More or less around this time, I had a short interview by the editor (or perhaps owner) of *The Monroe Evening News*, which later appeared in their published book, *In the Rockets' Red Glare; Recollections of Monroe County Veterans*.

In 1996 we again decided to travel to Doylestown for the solemn observance, and Al was even prepared with special video equipment for this occasion. However, in the interim there was an intensification of anti-Polish attacks in the press and TV, after the so-called "documentary" film PBS/Frontline *Shtetl*. Al Ziegler filmed the entire ceremony. They greeted him very politely, but coldly. There was no sign of the previous outpouring of courtesy and friendship from the entire hall. It was replaced by a polite reserve, although no one told him even one unpleasant word. I know that Al Ziegler felt this very sharply, but he was probably not surprised at this reaction which resulted from the current attacks on Poles.

After the nationwide broadcast of the PBS/Frontline film *Shtetl*, my daughter called the local PBS TV station with a request that they show the documentary film *Zegota*. Although they received a copy of the video from the film director, they still decided not to broadcast it. So, on several occasions we invited groups of people to our home to show them this real, other side of the problem. Naturally, we also invited over our Jewish friends.

After all, the majority of the actors of this documentary film *Zegota* are real witnesses of the drama. They are the participants and authors of this history, which unfortunately a majority of Jews does not wish to view and doesn't even want to hear about it. The kind of help that the Jews received during WWII in Poland was not found in any other country under German control. And this is precisely demonstrated in the film *Zegota*.

On September 17, 1997 I was invited by my friend Mr. Dale Schroeder to talk to the members of the local Kiwanis Club about the attack of the Soviets on Poland on September 17, 1939.

In 1997 and 1998, I had two presentations for students of American history at the University of Toledo, Ohio (at the invitation of teacher Carol Holeman). After my lectures, the students admitted to me privately that they had not known anything about the Polish part of the Holocaust.

In November 1997, I attended a public meeting at the Erie United Methodist Church in Erie, Michigan. Two students from the church had just returned from mission vacations spent in Poland, and were relating their impressions in a most flattering way about Poland. Following their presentation, I spoke on the subject of the Polish Holocaust.



In April 1998, the minister of the same church invited me to their Sunday service to speak at length on the subject of the Holocaust (during which the Germans murdered 6 million Polish citizens: 3 million Christian Poles and 3 million Jewish Poles). The lecture was received very favorably, and the attendees of that meeting recalled it to me on many occasions.

In 1997 and 1998, my friend Al Ziegler and I took part in a whole series of interviews and occasional discussions on the topic of the Jewish and Polish Holocaust, presenting it as it really had happened. Schools in Toledo, Maumee and Sylvania, Ohio, invited my Jewish friend along with me, a Christian, to speak on and explain those topics. Often, they were videotaped. I must state that my Jewish friend was very objective and reported the matters entirely in agreement with the truth.

Albert Ziegler recorded very many interviews with both Jews and Christians, probably hundreds of hours. Unfortunately, we were not always able to lecture together. Some schools only allotted 45 minutes for a presentation. The best situation was on those occasions when we had 2-3 hours for both of us.

On January 30, 1998, I was interviewed for the Steven Spielberg Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, with a specially hired videographer. The interview itself was performed by Albert Ziegler, one of the specially trained Spielberg interviewers in the region.

### 13. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Mr. Marian Wojciechowski was born April 25, 1914 in Polaniec, formerly Sandomierz district, currently Staszow district, Swietokrzyskie province in Poland. He finished basic school in Polaniec, and a co-educational high school in Busko-Zdroj. A graduate of the Szkola Glowna Handlowa in Warsaw (SGH - Warsaw School of Economics), Cooperatives Faculty (master's examination passed in 1937), and Business Education Faculty in 1940.

Former auditor of the Agricultural-Commerce Division (Dzial Rolniczo-Handlowy) of the Union of Agricultural and Economic Cooperatives in Warsaw (Zwiazek Spoldzielni Rolniczych i Zarobkowo-Gospodarczych w Warszawie).

Former platoon leader in the 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the Nadwislanski Lancers (21-szy Pulk Ulanow Nadwislanskich) in the Wolynska Cavalry Brigade in September 1939.

Former active member of the people's underground movement, Grupa "Raclawice" - AK (Armia Krajowa - People's Home Army).

Former prisoner of the Gestapo in Radom, and of the concentration camps Auschwitz, Gross Rosen and Leitmeritz -- from April 1942 to May 1945.

Former officer of the Polish Civilian Guard in the American Army under the name "Jan Wojmar."

Former member of the board "Zjednoczenie" and liaison officer for the Poles in the American-occupied zone in Germany to the International Refugee Organization (IRO) in Bad Kissingen.

Former bookkeeper, and later owner and publisher of the Polish weekly newspaper *Ameryka Echo* in Toledo, Ohio (1952-1961).

One of the former administrators of the City of Toledo, Ohio (1962-1980) in the Relocation, Housing, Rehabilitation and Community Organization.



Former administrator of the Neighborhood Housing Services in Toledo, Ohio in the years 1980-1994 (low percentage loans for repair of homes, also for the purchase of used homes and their reconstruction).

Founder of the Kolo Polskich Imigrantow (Circle of Polish Immigrants) in Toledo, Ohio.

Co-founder of the Skarb Narodowy (National Treasury) in Toledo, Ohio.

Former member of the Rada Narodowa R. P. (National Council of the Republic of Poland) in exile (awarded the Gold Cross of Merit).

Former ten-year commander of Post 74 PAVA (Polish Army Veterans of America; SWAP - Stowarzyszenie Weteranow Armii Polskiej) in Toledo, Ohio; Honorary Post Commander.

For many years, vice-president and for two years, president of the Polish American Congress in Toledo, Ohio (reorganized the local Congress by bringing in the younger generation of Americans of Polish heritage, and proposing a plan of projects for the coming years).

Member of many other organizations:

- \* Polish National Alliance (Zwiazek Narodowy Polski).
- \* Polish Legion of American Veterans - Post 207, Las Vegas, Nevada.
- \* Toledo Polish Cultural Association
- \* Toledo Poznan Alliance (Sister Cities International)
- \* The American Center of Polish Culture
- \* Urban Renewal Housing Authority
- \* American Legion - Ohio, Post 545 in Toledo
- \* International Institute of Greater Toledo, Inc.
- \* Kosciuszko Foundation
- \* Public Employee Retirees, Inc.