

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ANDRZEJ W. JURKIEWICZ

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Nora Levin

Date: August 6, 1986

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Gratz College

Melrose Park, PA 19027

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AJ - Andrzej W. Jurkiewicz [interviewee]

NL - Nora Levin [interviewer]

Date: August 6, 1986

Tape one, side one:

NL: All right, I want to thank you Mr. Jurkiewicz¹ for giving us this opportunity to speak with you. This is Nora Levin interviewing Mr. Andrzej Jurkiewicz August 6, 1986. Now we can start Mr. Jurkiewicz if you will by telling us a little about your family background; where your parents lived, in what city, and any special features about their life that have a bearing on your involvement with Jewish families later.

AJ: All right, I will be very, very interested in passing to you part of your history as well as my history...

NL: Good.

AJ: ...my life.

NL: Good.

AJ: I am not saying that I am very happy about it, because the happiness was taken from us by Hitler for many, many years and actually after even the war the happiness never returned. My experience with one of the most tragic, epoch, all humankind-- I'm talking right now about Second World War, I wonder if my generation can experience the full happiness Americans can enjoy. It somehow, not killed, but just destroyed, deformed...

NL: Deformed, because you too, are a survivor.

AJ: Because I am survivor and I am many times asking my creator why I survived actually. Because so many of you and so many of us, actually-- I cannot detach you of us because we are all human race so let's talk about us-- died in Warsaw for instance. They were killed every third citizen of Warsaw.

NL: In 1944.

AJ: Between '39 and '45 each third...

NL: Each third.

AJ: ...of Warsawers died.

NL: Okay.

AJ: But let's go to the, to the beginning actually, to your first fundamental question about my parents, their background. I will start with my wi-- with my mother because simply I admire her so much and I, I feel that she gave me actually the love of people. She was born in a little village in northern Poland.

NL: Called by what name?

AJ: Called Nidviecz [phonetic].

¹Interviewer (NL) pronounces Mr. Jurkiewicz's name as Turkiewicz throughout the interview. For consistency of correct spelling, his name has been spelled Jurkiewicz throughout.

NL: N-I...

AJ: It's like a Nidwicz [phonetic], near Toruń, Toruń is T-O-R-U-N, it's the famous city where Nicholas Copernicus was born, and so I was born there. I am so proud of it.

NL: And what was Mother's first name?

AJ: My mother's first name is Zofia, Zofia. Her maiden name is Zalewska.

NL: Very good.

AJ: So she was born in a little village. She was raised here by her mother because her father died in First World War. He was in the Russian army, the Czar's army and he, he just died and my mother never saw her father actually, had never knew her father. So they were raised by my grandmother whom I loved very much.

NL: Mother's mother?

AJ: Mother's mother, yes. And whole of Mother's family actually were strong people, very good people, caring people, loving people, helping each other people, so this was the environment where, where my senses were developed.

NL: Was the family fairly large?

AJ: Oh yes, it was a large...

NL: A large family.

AJ: Definitely a large family. Now my father's side, my father was born in east part of Poland, so called Małopolska [Eastern Poland]. He was born in Nadvirna near, it's, near Lviv, Lvov.

NL: Lvov.

AJ: Right now this is Ukraine, or Soviet Union.

NL: And his first name?

AJ: And his first name is Vladimiro, Jurkiewicz. His predecessors came from Yugoslavia.

NL: I see.

AJ: Right now even when you travel to Yugoslavia and you were asked for Jurkiewicz name there will be probably be 1,000,000 of them.

NL: [chuckle]

AJ: This is the most popular name, like here Smith for instance. [chuckle]

NL: What made that part of the family leave Yugoslavia?

AJ: I don't know. It was, it was centuries ago...

NL: Oh, I see.

AJ: ...so I don't know why they-- probably they were driven out by Turks.

NL: Turks, yes, yes. I would think so.

AJ: They moved north...

NL: They moved.

AJ: ...to the part of wherever they could...

NL: [unclear].

AJ: ...yes. So anyway he was born there. His father was a railroad inspector and actually that's where-- I don't know too much about his family because they were persecuted and they were-- many of them were killed by Bolsheviks and my father somehow, I never went back with his mind to this.

NL: [unclear]

AJ: He was-- he lost his mother and father when he was nine, I believe, and then he was thrown out of his house and he never returned back. He lost everything there and he never went back. He was then fighting with our-- one of our great leaders, General Pilsudski. He was fighting as a, as a actually a child against Bolsheviks and then...

NL: This must have been 1917, '18?

AJ: Oh yes, '18, '19, '20, '21 because my father was an orphan and the army took care of many thousands of orphans of First World War.

NL: I see.

AJ: So he was raised by the military schools and he left military after he married my mother. So the military gave him two professions, the first profession was he was an officer and of course he was teaching soldiers how to, how to operate a gun or whatever and the second profession was probably the-- at the beginning he was a musician amateur.

NL: I see.

AJ: But he was so good that after he left army for some reason, I don't know what, he started to be a professional musician.

NL: Wow.

AJ: So he was singer, he was-- he organized his jazz bands or whatever. First in Torun and then he moved to Warsaw.

NL: I see.

AJ: And he always told me that, that the only people who helped him in his musical profession and life were Jews.

NL: How interesting.

AJ: That's where, that's where I first learned about Jews...

NL: How...

AJ: ...from him.

NL: How could they have helped him in what context?

AJ: Because, you see Jews from centuries were always famous artists, especially musicians.

NL: Violinists.

AJ: Violinists and all others, pianists, whatever, cellists.

NL: So they found this talented young soldier...

AJ: So they found him in Toruń and one of them was probably touring Poland with some of...

NL: ...traveling...

AJ: ...the group, heard my father and he said, "Why don't you move to Warsaw? I will help you. I will meet you there."

NL: Interesting.

AJ: You see, almost all Jews before, between First and Second War were using for one reason or another, I don't know, Polish names, Polish, Polish phonetical names. For instance, the family, I had heard the names of families my parents helped during Second World War to survive. Before a war the families were like Landau. It's a famous family from Łódź, Łódź, it's a, [unclear] a city.

NL: But it's a German name.

AJ: It's-- yes.

NL: Isn't it German?

AJ: Landau can be German but I knew another Landau who was Jew, or Lunde...

NL: Lunde.

AJ: Another, the other name but they covered themselves by a Polish name like Wolowski.

NL: Changed or just...

AJ: Changed to survive.

NL: To survive.

AJ: Just to survive.

NL: Of course.

AJ: And probably the people who were in the middle class intellectuals, if a Jew, Polish Jew was very famous, I mean a brilliant, a brilliant mind, probably they were not pressed to survive and they would, they would remain under the original name, but some of them would change their name and call themselves like Wolowski, like-- I had a person, my friend, a soloist, a singer of soloist from opera, his original name was Neuman.

NL: Very German.

AJ: Yes, but he changed the name and he was-- his name was Novitski.

NL: It meant that they would have to get false papers then, wouldn't they?

AJ: I don't know, probably.

NL: Or some new identification.

AJ: Probably this was a new identification, probably the people would identified him or think that he is Jew but with a Polish name probably the attention was somehow this...

NL: Diverted.

AJ: Yes.

NL: Yes. So now to get back a little bit how old were you when father died?

AJ: No, Father didn't die. Father is still alive. He is here in Philadelphia.

NL: You said-- was it grandfather who died?
AJ: Yes, my grandfather...
NL: I see, excuse me.
AJ: ...was prosecuted and he was executed actually. He died.
NL: Oh, he died, but Father...
AJ: But my father survived, no, my father, my parents I am lucky that...
NL: Thankfully.
AJ: ...my father, he is 80 years old or 81.
NL: Right.
AJ: And he still drives car, he comes from time to time to see his...
NL: Oh that's wonderful...
AJ: ...grandchildren, yes.
NL: Lovely.
AJ: Yes, yes.
NL: So now he fought in the army against the Bolsheviks and then when Poland was reconstituted...
AJ: Yes.
NL: Did he work?
AJ: Yes.
NL: As a musician?
AJ: As a musician, a professional musician. He was singing in the radio-- his genre, musical genre was actually the old Russian songs, his repertoire was all the gypsy songs.
NL: And some folk songs?
AJ: Some, probably some folk songs. He was singing in the best, best restaurants or clubs of Warsaw and he had his own bands or...
NL: Troupes.
AJ: Troupes, orchestras and he was doing pretty well.
NL: So you were born in Warsaw?
AJ: I was born in Toruń. I was born in Toruń and after I was about two and a half or three, my parents moved to Warsaw and from this when I was-- I was born in 1931.
NL: I see.
AJ: So in 1934 I believe my parents moved to Warsaw and we were, we were arrested actually-- we means I, my mother, we were arrested in 1944 during the Warsaw uprising and then we were moved from Warsaw to one of the camps near Warsaw and then to another camp and then finally to Vienna, to Austria.
NL: I see. By the Russians.
AJ: Not the Russians, by Germans.
NL: In '44?

AJ: Yes, the war ended in '45...

NL: Yes.

AJ: ...in May, right.

NL: But-- well we'll come to that in a little while.

AJ: Yes.

NL: Yes, well now was your life as a child fairly happy in Warsaw in the '30s.

AJ: Oh, I...

NL: How was your school life?

AJ: ... would say very happy.

NL: Very happy?

AJ: I would say very happy and I would go back to these years through almost all my life, because actually we had everything. We were free, we had food, we had our home, parents, happiness, so...

NL: Did you have-- do you have brothers?

AJ: Yes, I have one sister...

NL: One sister.

AJ: Who is in Poland.

NL: Is in Poland?

AJ: She's in Poland.

NL: She was older?

AJ: She was also involved in opera activities. She was one of the famous Polish singers.

NL: And may I have her name?

AJ: Her name is Irena Jurkiewicz. She was all of her life on the stage as Jurkiewicz. So...

NL: And your school life was happy?

AJ: And my school life actually was a very short one, because of the war. I went to school-- I started my school in '38, 1938...

NL: Oh.

AJ: ...so I was just one year in school.

NL: Oh, of course.

AJ: And then the war...

NL: The war.

AJ: ...interrupted all my education, not completely because I still attended schools, but private schools or undercover schools. I never went to an official school, because first of all they were closed, they were...

NL: Yes.

AJ: Germans were not interested in education.

NL: Father served in the Polish army I suppose?

AJ: Polish no, my father was not in the Polish army because simply he was a musician and just before Second World War-- the Second World War started on September the 1st. We were in Gdynia in the north part of Poland near Gdańsk where the war started actually. We were spending our vacation on my grandparents, grandmother's house in Gdynia. She had a restaurant in Gdynia and we were guests there. And just before war started, two days before war started we tried to get back to Warsaw. My father was occupied in Gdynia actually, he was performing, he was working there and...

NL: Did you...?

AJ: Yes.

NL: Excuse me. Did you have or from what your parents tell you any warnings about a possible German invasion?

AJ: Oh, we received a warning but it was actually the last second before the war. I said two days before, we decided, you know, with a panic to go back. We are coming to the railroad station, there is no place. There are thousands of people who tried to get out from Gdynia. So somehow because of my family in Gdynia strong young men they took us with the arms up above the crowd and threw us through windows into the railroad wagon.

NL: You and your sister?

AJ: My sister, me and my mother.

NL: And your mother, and father stayed?

AJ: My father stayed and probably for another train, and he came behind us. He came to Warsaw behind us, but I remember when we went through German territory...

NL: Yes.

AJ: ...between Gdynia and Gdańsk they already started to, to shoot at our...

NL: Excuse me. [a child entered the room] Hello, hello [chuckle] Do you want to stop and hold her for a while?

AJ: No, no, no, no, I have to, go ahead.

NL: Yes, now where were you bound for, Mr. Jurkiewicz?

AJ: We were bound for Warsaw, and just before Gdańsk they started to shoot at our, at our...

NL: Trains.

AJ: At our trains, yes. So of course, the people, the conductor gave us immediately order to, just to lay down on the floor. So everybody was on the floor. This was my first experience with the war before the war started to lay down, to cover yourself so we will be not killed. So we passed this dangerous and we arrived at Warsaw and this was one day before the war. When we came to Warsaw we then realized that the war is actually...

NL: Coming.

AJ: Hangs on a, on a, a hair.

NL: You were in your own home at that point?

AJ: We came to Warsaw, to the-- again, we didn't have any commun-- any transportation from the station to our house. So it was very difficult to get to our house. It was, it was a distance of five, six kilometers and somehow, I believe my mother asked some of the villages, villagers to take us, and so with the horses and the wagons and it's-- [Speaking to someone else in the room] you must go outside and play with him outside.

UI: I don't know where, I know he will cry but...

AJ: Okay, where's Abel?

UI: She's feeding Julie.

AJ: Okay, so you have to be with him outside, okay. Sit down on the grass. He will play with the grass. Don't let him eat the grass. But he will be...

UI: I can't watch him all the time.

AJ: Well you watch him for a while, okay. [Speaking to interviewer again] So next, next morning around four in the morning we were waked up by bombardments...

NL: Bombardments.

AJ: ...and that's, that's it.

NL: That's it.

AJ: The hell started. My father was immediately one of the organizers of self-defense. You see with every war you have good people and bad people. The bad people will go and rob, destroy the homes or whatever. So in order to survive and to protect the goods of the community, they organize cells of self-defense. My father was one of the commanders of the self-defense in Warsaw. And then of course, in a while we started to organize an underground army and you probably know a lot about the so called A.K.²

NL: The A.K.

AJ: Yes, I was one of the members of A.K. and I was just child actually but the child was very useful for our activities because the Germans would never believe or suspect that a little guy is actually a soldier. I was a messenger; I would run through streets with some message, some telegrams from one unit to another unit. This was the only communication between, between units. There was no radio involved at this time, no telephones, so the only way to communicate was through messengers. There are hundreds, maybe thousands of them running for A. K.

NL: Yes.

AJ: To keep informed, and to keep in contact, so...

NL: Of course, eventually the Germans conquered the city and so after the...

AJ: The Germans conquered the Warsaw city, but before the Germans conquered the city-- oh you are talking about '39...

NL: Nine, yes.

AJ: '39.

NL: Yeah. What did you then do?

²Armia Krajowa, Home Army, the underground military organization in occupied Poland.

AJ: Oh, I remember that, I remember that day when finally our freedom was taken from us and I remember that my father took me to the streets of Warsaw to show me the, the Germans first time I saw the Germans. My first encounter with Germans was terrible because I saw on the platform of a truck-- I don't remember four or five bodies of burned German pilots who were...

NL: Shot down.

AJ: Shot down and I remember that there were many people standing looking at it and one of the-- from the car I heard, "Oh this is a woman, this is a woman", you know and they were all swollen, all you know, they were burned completely, they were destroyed. So this was first time I saw it, Germans. The second time, probably a week after again on the streets I saw the German arms carrying into the town. Of course in between it was terrible bombardment and many of our friends died.

NL: On the streets?

AJ: On the streets, in houses. They would bombard us with artillery fire now.

NL: And...

AJ: And I would...

NL: How would you, excuse me, how were you getting some food? Were you still able to stay in your house Mr. Jurkiewicz?

AJ: The food, that's a good question, we were not prepared for the war, so we didn't have of course food.

NL: Right.

AJ: There was no food and we were little and we had to eat. We-- from this point I remember that actually the milk for instance, full milk was for five years I don't know the...

NL: Taste...

AJ: ...the taste of, of milk.

NL: And the bread, were you able to...

AJ: And the bread it was of course a problem, everything, everything was a problem.

NL: You had to queue up?

AJ: We ate the horse meat, the horses were killed on the streets were taken apart and we ate it, and mother prepared it so wonderfully that, that I would never recognize it as a horse meat until after we ate it.

NL: She wouldn't tell you.

AJ: She would tell us, "Did you, did you like this meat?" I said, "Fantastic, do you have some more?" She said, "No the rest is for tomorrow, and you know what it was?" I said "Oh probably, I don't really know what it is." [unclear] was horse meat. So...

NL: You were glad to have it...

AJ: So this was during the bombardment, of course, by Germans. After they came the-- actually we survived because what Father would do is he would go to the villagers around, around Warsaw and would exchange food for some clothes or something. He would bring something there and he'll bring...

NL: Jewelry?

AJ: Yes.

NL: Trading?

AJ: Trading.

NL: And you were able to stay in your house for a little while?

AJ: No.

NL: No.

AJ: We were moved three or four times during the war from one house to another. The first house...

NL: By the Germans?

AJ: Not only by the Germans but, but-- the first time we moved because our house was almost destroyed by a bomb. It, the bomb fell across the street and killed many people there and we were in this house, in my old apartment-- how we survived I don't know. My sister almost, almost you know, lost her mind because the explosion was so tremendous.

NL: [unclear].

AJ: Unexpectedly there was no alarm before. Usually they would pull an alarm to go to the cellar and protect yourself. Here without any alarm without nothing, we were doing something at home and then suddenly an explosion.

NL: Blast.

AJ: Therefore the blast killed people across the street and all our windows, everything was pushed by air. So actually there was no, no glass, no wood, nobody could repair it, so we had to move from this, but we survived. And this was first felt finger of creator that we survived, you see? We are talking about split of second of pushing the bottom of the bomb, this split of second with this speed, the bomb or the air or whatever pushed the bomb just across the street, and this was so many times during the war that, that we-- I saw that we were just touching the death, touching the death, but still alive.

NL: Were you able to stay together for a good part of the...

AJ: ..we were almost all...

NL: ...early time...

AJ: ...all the occupation of Warsaw we were together, yes, we were together.

NL: Now did the Germans force Father into some labor battalion.

AJ: No, no.

NL: No.

AJ: He was still musician.

NL: Is that so?

AJ: He was still playing now for Germans, okay.

NL: I see.

AJ: He was still playing for the Soviet soldiers coming from the East Front but this was a good connection...

NL: Sure.

AJ: ...for him...

NL: Sure, sure.

AJ: ...not only to survive but to help, to help other people. For instance, we moved-- one of people who offered us a shelter after we moved from this destroyed apartment, was a Jew, a very famous, very famous, the people who make furs.

NL: Furrier.

AJ: Furrier.

NL: Furrier.

AJ: Yes, he had all huge apartment, many, many rooms and he said, "Mr. Jurkiewicz come here live for awhile with us."

NL: He wasn't in the ghetto?

AJ: No, he-- at this time this was 1940...

NL: Before...

AJ: 1940.

NL: Before the ghetto?

AJ: Before the ghetto, before the repercussions-- they started the rep...

[Tape one, side one ended.]

Tape one, side two:

NL: Tape one, side two continuing our talk with Mr. Jurkiewicz.

AJ: Yes, so anyway...

NL: You stayed with this furrier.

AJ: With this furrier, his name was Mr. Vigodnick [phonetic]. He had two daughters, again Polish names, Irena and Maria but probably they were Irena and Maria because of survival. They changed their names in order to survive...

NL: Although isn't it true, Mr. Jurkiewicz, that many Jews especially in Warsaw were wholly assimilated culturally...

AJ: Oh yes, definitely...

NL: ...and loved the language and literature and so on...

AJ: Absolutely, absolutely.

NL: ...so they may have had these names quite naturally...

AJ: Yes, yes.

NL: But it's interesting that you say some may have just adopted Polish sounding names.

AJ: Yes. I should say.

NL: Now what was this man's situation? Was he still able to keep his shops going?

AJ: He was working at his shop during the day but during the night he was a radio operator.

NL: Ah ha, and where was he getting...

AJ: He was, was...

NL: ...information?

AJ: He was in Polish underground army...

NL: I see.

AJ: ...sending informations to, certain informations to outside, to London probably.

NL: Polish Government-in-exile?

AJ: Yes.

NL: Possibly.

AJ: Yes.

NL: And getting messages.

AJ: And getting messages, many, actually we shouldn't talk about Jews because they are Polish citizens, they are in Polish armies, they're in Polish universities, they were everywhere; they were citizens of Poland.

NL: They were integrated into...

AJ: And they were Jews, they were Germans, they were Ukrainians, they were Belarussians. There were many conglomerates of nationalities that...

NL: It's interesting for us to know that there was that much integration. See, that's important for us to understand.

AJ: Yeah, yes.

NL: We know that there were some Jews in the Polish army because later on we discovered that they were thrown into the ghetto, but the fact of their being in the Polish army is an important fact...

AJ: Oh yes.

NL: ...to show the integration.

AJ: Oh yes. Some of them are great patriots and I met them after Second World War. They were just great patriots. Some of them went to serve Stalin for instance.

NL: Yeah.

AJ: Some of them were prosecuting, not Polish people but people who were against communism.

NL: A whole range of...

AJ: So you have, you have such a range-- now the war takes the mask off every human being.

NL: That's a very...

AJ: You know, in a tragic situation where there is a moment to survive, there you will really learn about human nature.

NL: That's a good way of...

AJ: ...values...

NL: ...describing life when it, as you say, masks are peeled away.

AJ: You know, I was witnessing, for instance, ghetto. I was witnessing the destruction of ghetto by German armies and I remember for instance an episode when they started to burn ghetto, burn ghetto which was not completely empty, there were still people inside...

NL: Yes.

AJ: ...and they would start to burn the apartment houses with people inside...

NL: This was during the revolt, the uprising?

AJ: Yes, during the uprising.

NL: Yes.

AJ: And I remember one moment when all the apartment building burns, you know, from the hole the windows, the smoke and the...

NL: Flames.

AJ: ...fire, flames coming out and suddenly on the second floor balcony-- there were many balconies always in the apartments in Europe, in Warsaw we had balconies-- suddenly on one of these balconies I see a, a woman with a child, with a little child, little baby in her arms and she is with like nightgown with some long things on her-- it was a distance of, oh my God, like from here to this wall-- it was not too far, and

in front of me is a German unit with a heavy machine gun on, on a steel legs, they are, you know, in everything, fully dressed for a battle and this, this woman is running from one corner of this balcony to another. She looks down but she doesn't know what to do with it, the little baby with herself, she doesn't cry, I didn't hear a cry but I hear behind me people who are looking at it. We were hopeless and helpless, we couldn't help her.

NL: Of course.

AJ: First of all it was the wall.

NL: Eight feet wall.

AJ: Yeah. So finally the-- we started to shout, "*Skakać, skakać*" means "Jump, jump, jump".

NL: Jump, jump.

AJ: And one of the officers is coming to this machine gun operator and touching him, "Hey, don't you see her there?"

NL: Kill her.

AJ: "Don't you see her there?" and he looks at him-- this, this guy looks at him and he's saying, "This is a woman."

NL: [unclear].

AJ: And he said, "Oh come on, Hans" and his Hans just do boom, boom, br-rr-rr [speaker made noise like a machine gun] and that's it. I was, I was at this time maybe 11, 12 years old. Shortly after, maybe a week, 10 days after I saw an execution on the streets of Warsaw, well there were many of them but I, they...

NL: Witnessed.

AJ: ...they closed a block and at midni-- midday they took all the people walking on the streets, on one side of the, of the building and, and holded us for a few minutes and they came with trucks and took 30 people from the trucks, the people with white clothes, with the tapes on it.

NL: Adhesive tape, tape?

AJ: Yes, adhesive tapes. They were all like drunk people, they couldn't stay. They were, they-- I learned that before this execution they usually took almost all blood for German soldiers, for what, for East? They took all our blood before they would kill us. So they were, you know, they were almost like drunk people and then it was, it was with precision of, of, of some machine, they would put the machine gun and they killed all of them in front of us.

NL: To show you that this would...

AJ: Yes.

NL: ...happen to you...

AJ: Yes.

NL: ...if you...

AJ: We were the witnesses...

NL: ...if...

AJ: So I said in 10 days, in about two weeks I was white. I was just, I, I turned white. I don't know why. It was not, not a disease. I was not...

NL: Shock. It was shock.

AJ: It was shock. My mother would cry and my father would say, "Oh leave him alone," etc. but my mother knew probably, felt probably that I was so sensitive person.

NL: Had you had any Jewish playmates?

AJ: Of course.

NL: Any special friends?

AJ: Of course, I had a special friend who survived the war with whom I was sleeping for six months in one bed and we would-- I would take him for a walk because he was so white. He would never come out during the day any place, not even close to the window.

NL: He was already in the ghetto?

AJ: He was already in the ghetto and somebody took him, his family took him from the ghetto because some of the people were just separated and part of the family was in ghetto and part of the family was in hiding outside ghetto, and they would try to get them out.

NL: Of course.

AJ: And to find a place where they could somehow survive for a while. So one of them was Yezhick, Yezhick Wolowski [phonetic] was his deck name, but actually his name, actual name was Landau.

NL: Oh he was one of the Landau's?

AJ: Yes, he was the same age like myself.

NL: So you would take him out for a walk?

AJ: I would take them for a walk just when, just before the darkness.

NL: The curfew.

AJ: Of course, curfew was there.

NL: Yes.

AJ: Okay, but I know the ways. I know where to go and I knew around our...

NL: The safe places.

AJ: Yes, so I would take him just before for 15 minutes, 10 minutes. Just-- it was not my idea by the way, it was my mother's idea. Look he is so white, he doesn't see sun, he doesn't have the air, take him out, take him out. So we would go together and talk together but he was looking so Jewish that we feared that even not German but some bad, bad person would say, "Hey look."

NL: He was being hidden by a Polish family...

AJ: So.

NL: ...outside the ghetto?

AJ: Yes, we were the first family who, who took him from the ghetto.

NL: I see.

AJ: He was in the fear, he was psychological...

NL: Terrified.

AJ: He would have nightmares. He would wake me up once, twice a night with tremendous scream and he would say "*Mame, mame* [Mommy], or *mameleh* [dear mommy]." You know, in Jewish, I didn't understand even the words. My father speaks Jewish so he probably [chuckle]-- and he would point at the door, that the SS is at the door. Okay, so he was terrified, he was just...

NL: And you were able to keep him for six...?

AJ: For six months he was with us, him and his mother and his mother's sister.

NL: Three people?

AJ: Three people for six month, and my father through his connections because he was going to the villages outside Warsaw, he found them place in some villages outside Warsaw.

NL: I see.

AJ: So after six month they could stay longer, but some of bad Polish people I should say-- one day knocking the door, my father is opening the door and this man is saying, "You're hiding Jews here," in Polish. So he knew that this is probably not, not a policeman or somebody who-- but you know to say to you so loud, you are hiding a Jew. It's almost a death sentence because...

NL: Sure.

AJ: ...if he would come with an SS and say the same, we were dead in few minutes...

NL: Yes, I know.

AJ: ...together with them because they were inside and they heard it.

NL: They heard it.

AJ: And they said, "Mr. Jurkiewicz, please take us from here. We cannot stay longer. They will go, they probably came for money. They probably will come again." What my father did is-- "What? What did you say, Jews here?" and he started to beat him and he threw him to the floor down and then asked, you know, every house in Warsaw, the apartment houses had some manager and this manager almost killed him because this was something, something unusual.

NL: Disgraceful...

AJ: This was not a usual treatment. It was unusual. But the charge were there, the charge were there. In Polish nation, the *Volksdeutsche* people were worse than *Reichsdeutsche*. In Jewish communities for instance, I know, I heard, I read that the *Judenrat* [Jewish Council] or *Juden* Police was sometimes worse than Germans.

NL: Yes, terrible...

AJ: My father said that they-- in, after the war, in Austria, in Salzburg I believe, or in Linz, they recognized on the street one of the *Kapos* from one of the

concentration camps and believe me-- father said, "Believe me son they, they just teared him apart, they just pulled him apart. It was an execution in few minutes that worse than that. It was just apart."

NL: Yes, the *Kapos* were barbaric.

AJ: Yeah, and I don't know why they did it. Maybe they were not barbaric but maybe they feared to die and the only way to survive maybe was to go, to go and to make this what they are ordering me to do. Maybe I will survive. Maybe they loved so much the life.

NL: They collaborated in order to survive.

AJ: Some of them collaborated with the whole, pre-- I'll get the word?

NL: Gestapo.

AJ: Yes.

NL: Yes, there are some terrible stories.

AJ: Probably even inside the Gestapo were some Jews who were collaborating with that.

NL: I'm sure there's some...

AJ: Maybe some great minds in the science, worked for Hitler's army, for Hitler's machine because there were, the mind was so brilliant everywhere. And is, it's a unique-- they are unique, Jews are unique. To me they are...

NL: Well...

AJ: ...the brains, maybe the religion, maybe, something is inside this people...

NL: The genes.

AJ: The genes, maybe the genes?

NL: Well now, Mr. Jurkiewicz...

AJ: Yes.

NL: Did you have some contact with that movement called Zegota? Do you know the Z-E-G-O-T-A which was organized across class lines among the Poles, from the peasants all the way up to the aristocracies just to help hide Jews?

AJ: No.

NL: You don't even...

AJ: No, no.

NL: And I don't know if I'm pronouncing it correctly.

AJ: No, Zegota, no.

NL: Zegota.

AJ: Never.

NL: You've heard of it.

AJ: No, I never heard of it.

NL: You never heard of it.

AJ: I never heard of...

NL: I see.

AJ: ...about this. In Warsaw, you see we were surrounded by so many organizations that I know my unit, I know my people. I was probably too young...

NL: Too-- yes.

AJ: ...to go into the political extremes of life.

NL: Of course.

AJ: Of course.

NL: Yes.

AJ: So I, my greatest experience was that parents one night said, "Children, we have to help. Children, we'll have a new situation in the house. Children, move from this room to another room because we will prepare this room for people who come here. Don't talk to anybody about them and they will stay for a while with us," and then Father would recall the situation in the ghetto. We will recall one more thing, a few Jewish children will survive in our apartment house under the roof where usually you would take the laundry for drying.

NL: I see, what year was this?

AJ: It was '42, '43.

NL: When the worse of the deportations...

AJ: Yes, they were just children without adults. They would hide over there and they would come in the very morning knocking the door to give them some food and my mother would give them food but my mother even didn't tell me or my sister that they are there.

NL: Really? Really?

AJ: So after, after this experience my mother would say-- after, after they talked to us about this people my mother would say to ask, "Listen if you see somebody up or hear somebody, ignore. Don't talk please, don't talk. It's very dangerous, don't talk about it."

NL: How did she get those children?

AJ: Because they knocked, they knocked.

NL: They came asking for...

AJ: Yes, yes.

NL: ...safety?

AJ: Not safety, they knocked for food.

NL: But how did she initially get them?

AJ: They just...

NL: [unclear]

AJ: She just opened the door and she saw little children...

NL: Oh my, oh my.

AJ: ...little children and "Please, please give food, please food," and the dialect, you could recognize immediately with it because they were, they were coming not only in the morning but during the day they would come to the yard. They would

stay, sing a song and then ask for some food and people would throw them, like you know, this is city. They would come a band to play for you and then we are throwing some money.

NL: So these were children from the ghetto do you think?

AJ: They absolutely, absolutely they were from the ghetto.

NL: They were able to escape from the ghetto?

AJ: Yeah, they would escape you know how? They would escape...

NL: Here we are.

AJ: ...right over the wall of the, the wall here. Right, this is the wall. The wall was covered with some glass parts, some, some, you couldn't go through the wall but in the wall here there were little openings for water, for channel...

NL: And they could crawl under?

AJ: ...for drainage...

NL: They would crawl under.

AJ: Yes, they would go through drainage holes.

NL: So your, your apartment was near the ghetto walls then?

AJ: No, no, no, no...

NL: It wasn't.

AJ: No, not the-- but I saw them coming out this way. I saw them coming in this way. I saw once when they came out little children, they were very skinny. You couldn't recognize them because they were like, like skeletons, skeletons. They came out and I saw the Polish policeman who was patrolling this, this part saw them and he asked them to go back and they went back. They didn't...

NL: Run away.

AJ: He didn't give them chance to go because he knew that they are going for a piece of potato or, or some...

NL: Bread, yes.

AJ: ...piece of bread...

NL: Yes.

AJ: ...and they would come back. They would come back with this food.

NL: But these people, the children who Mother took care of, they stayed in your house?

AJ: No, not in our house, in our apartment house.

NL: In the apartment house.

AJ: We rented an apartment in an apartment house and they were in the top, I think it was like six or seven stories, a house, and after this there was a roof, there was a place for drying your laundry...

NL: Yes.

AJ: ...they...

NL: Yes, how long do you think they stayed Mr. Jurkiewicz?

AJ: It's hard to say how long.

NL: Weeks?

AJ: I didn't see them. I had to ask my mother how many times, for how-- period how long was the period when she gave them the food. [phone rings, machine off and on]

NL: So David had told me that you remembered bringing some bread to the wall. Did I get that story?

AJ: Oh yes.

NL: Tell us about that please.

AJ: Oh yes. This is again my mother and my father would initiate this. They would always share, the whole war, they would always share whatever they had, piece of meat or piece of bread or some potatoes Father brought from the villages in his hands. They would always share with somebody who needed it, and-- so we would go to the walls and we will throw it through the walls but it was too dangerous.

NL: Of course.

AJ: So what we would do-- part of the wall was, was along the tracks of, not train, how do you call it, tramway...

NL: Trolley.

AJ: Trolley.

NL: Yes.

AJ: So we would drive a trolley-- it moves-- and from the trolley, through the window...

NL: I see.

AJ: ...or whatever...

NL: Throw it.

AJ: ...we would throw it through the walls. This was one thing. The other thing is, the other sort of help, I don't know if you can help. This was, this is help, it's still help because these people were completely cut off from the world.

NL: Yes.

AJ: All right. They were just, they were-- the sentence was death.

NL: Yes.

AJ: First, don't give them food. They will die. If they will not die then we'll shoot them or we'll gas them.

NL: Deport them.

AJ: The second thing where we would go with this was to the concentration-- P.O.W. camp.

NL: Oh.

AJ: It was in, in one of the, the suburbs of Warsaw, there was a whole Russian army, Soviet army there, P.O.W. camp.

NL: Oh, and what was the name of the camp?

AJ: P.O.W. Camp.
NL: P.O.W. Camp. But outside...
AJ: P.O.W. Camp.
NL: But outside of Warsaw?
AJ: Outside of Warsaw was huge camp. There were thousands of Russian...
NL: I see.
AJ: ... Soviet soldiers and what we would do, again we would go there and we would throw some food...
NL: Food.
AJ: ...usually potatoes.
NL: Yes. Oh my.
AJ: Because this-- with the bread was very difficult, sometimes we would take bread, but potatoes because they would survive with potatoes.
NL: Yes.
AJ: It was so bad that they would eat each other.
NL: I heard about cannibalism, yes.
AJ: Yes.
NL: Yes, I heard about that.
AJ: So this was my experience...
NL: And where was your sister during this time?
AJ: During this time, together with me.
NL: Together.
AJ: We were together.
NL: Yes, yes.
AJ: We were all together. She would do the same what I did. She was younger, about two years younger...
NL: You did it together.
AJ: We all together, we would do the same...
NL: Did?
AJ: The same thing.
NL: Did your folks, did your parents talk about the gas chambers at all? Did...
AJ: No.
NL: Were they aware of where the Jews...
AJ: No.
NL: ...were being sent?
AJ: No.
NL: No.
AJ: No, because, because not only Jews were sent, you see. In Warsaw we knew that there is concentration camp. We knew that all people arrested are actually, finally moved to the concentration camp. There were in immediate vicinity of Warsaw

some concentration camps and they would kill them there. Some of them would be moved to a huge concentration camps around. So, to my best recollection of this time I knew that Jews are moved from whole Warsaw, whole Poland into the ghettos. I knew that they will be separated from all population.

NL: Right.

AJ: We didn't know why, I didn't know why they are separated them. I knew that they just stayed in the ghetto.

NL: Right.

AJ: Right?

NL: Right.

AJ: But then, after they started the fight in ghetto and they started move them, I mean first move them, they started first...

NL: Yes.

AJ: ... to empty the ghetto.

NL: Right.

AJ: ..and my question always was, why did they don't fight?

NL: Ah ha.

AJ: Why they don't organize themselves? And you know that the answer to this question-- part of the answer, I found when I started to, to read about Jews a little bit more, about their history, about their beliefs, their religion, and I know that their religion forbids a Jew to kill and now I'm connecting that they would go, they would die but they would not kill.

NL: Some.

AJ: Yes, but finally the young generation...

NL: Yeah, the young generation.

AJ: ...said, "Okay I am going to die, but at least one of them must die with me."

NL: Yes.

AJ: And they, that's what they did.

NL: Now, did...?

AJ: And they were heroes.

NL: Yes, they were heroes.

AJ: In our opinion, in our, in our mind they were heroes, therefore they were getting all the support they could get from us with ammunition, with weapons, with everything possible...

NL: You knew of some Polish families who were giving them, or selling them some guns and things, Mr. Jurkiewicz?

AJ: No directly. Indirectly, yes.

NL: Yes.

AJ: Indirectly how we got guns for them, I can tell you about my unit.

NL: Please.
AJ: The Hungarians, from Hungary.
NL: Yes.
AJ: The people who-- the soldiers who went with Hitler to fight against Bolshevism.
NL: Yes.
AJ: Some of these units came to Warsaw.
NL: I see.
AJ: And these Hungarians would give us all the weapons they have.
NL: Really?
AJ: They gave us the weapons.
NL: Why?
AJ: I don't know why.
NL: Did they know...
AJ: They just gave us the weapons.
NL: They didn't want to fight against...
AJ: I don't know. They didn't want to fight in name of Hitler probably.
NL: Ah ha! They had special uniforms?
AJ: They had uniforms different than Hitler had.
NL: But those...
AJ: They had, they had, they are looking different, but I remember and probably our commander talked to the commander of Hungarian people. They are close to our heart, you know, that one of our kings was from Hungary.
NL: Yes, yes, I do, yes.
AJ: So the Hungarians were always close to our heart as our brothers. So probably on this...
NL: Basis.
AJ: On this basis they came together, they drink some wine and then the Hungarians said, "Look, you see this truck? I have all machine guns inside. You can have them." Our commander took all of us children and said, "Let's go. You have to empty this truck," and we empty it. We just grabbed them guns, grabbed, grabbed, grabbed, empty it into our cellars.
NL: Ah ha.
AJ: Okay? Now, if this weapon went to ghetto, I don't know, but this was one of the ways how we got weapons.
NL: I see. And you were still with the A.K?
AJ: Yes, all the time. And I was not directly involved in any support of Warsaw ghetto...
[Tape one, side two ended.]

Tape two, side one.

NL: Yes, so...

AJ: Three of this people from ghetto were, were in our house for six months and then, and then you know how this situation was interrupted by this person...

NL: Yes.

AJ: ...and they begged my father please, save-- not only us but first of all save your family, because you will die, as you know, together with us.

NL: Right. That's right.

AJ: So finally my father found a place for them in one of the villages and just they moved one by one, not all of them.

NL: Not all of them.

AJ: One by one they were moved to this place, so in a few days there were no more with us. They were in contact with my father because my father was trying forth and back with food and they stayed there for a long period of time.

NL: In the village?

AJ: In this village. Not-- then we, they-- the communication was, was broken with them because of the uprising in Warsaw and etc., etc., and after the war we had two places to meet together.

NL: Really?

AJ: We-- yes, we knew about two places where we will go and if we survive we'll meet each other. One place was in Gdynia, my grandmother's place. We gave her address and everything.

NL: Yes.

AJ: And the other place was their place in Łódź. They gave us the the...

NL: That's Łódź.

AJ: Łódź.

NL: Łódź.

AJ: Because they were originally from Łódź, they were [unclear] in Łódź and then they were moved into Warsaw and then to ghetto.

NL: Did you meet after the war?

AJ: No, we didn't meet because we were in Vienna.

NL: Ah yes.

AJ: We returned to Poland in 1948.

NL: Ahhh.

AJ: They were in our place in Gdynia in '45. All right? And they said-- and they met my mother's sister...

NL: I see. They did survive...

AJ: ...who was already in Gdynia.

NL: They survived.

AJ: They said, "We survived," and my aunt said, "And they survived. They are right now in Vienna." "Okay, we are going to Vienna. We will find them there," and they never found us. They never contacted us. My father started to look for them and he wrote letters. One of the letters was to the Red Cross...

NL: Cross, right.

AJ: ...looking for them. This is probably in German.

NL: In German, yeah.

AJ: But you can see; you can see...

NL: The Landau name...

AJ: Yes, where he asked for this persons, if they survived. The other is...

NL: Did he ever receive an answer?

AJ: Yes, this is the answer.

NL: Oh this is the answer.

AJ: This is the answer.

NL: Oh, uhhuh.

AJ: The other answer is here. This is from Israel. He wrote to Israel and he received a letter from 1st President of Israel [tape off then on]

NL: Weizmann?

AJ: With, with [unclear] letters.

NL: Right, right.

AJ: And this is one of-- my father cannot read it but this is one of the documents he received from there. I don't understand this one. Maybe you can read it and tell me what they say here. [tape off then on]

NL: Well it-- this is a form from the Jewish Agency Search Division with the registration number of Josefa and a request that you fill out an enclosed form. You don't know if Father ever filled such a form out? Well I'll make a copy of this, Mr. Jurkiewicz, and there are some sources that I can check. The Łódź Chronicle, a recently completed volume. I'm sure there must be lists of survivors from Łódź and I'll make some inquiries for you. [tape off then on]. I'll have the translations sent and this I will get some help on. But, are you familiar with the *Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto* that has been published recently?

AJ: Nope.

NL: I think I could perhaps help you find out more about this family, whether indeed there is any record-- do you know the center called Yad Vashem?

AJ: Yes.

NL: In Jerusalem?

AJ: Of course, of course.

NL: Now first of all, your family should be honored as Righteous Gentiles for having-- oh yes, it's important first of all for Jews, for Jews to know about this.

AJ: I know, therefore I am with you.

NL: But I mean...

AJ: Because I would like to give you everything I know...

NL: Well...

AJ: ...because it-- it must be, this must be the end of...

NL: It must be the end and it must be...

AJ: It never again can happen this again. I, this is for him and for my, my babies and your babies. They cannot fight again.

NL: We're going to send you copies of this tape so you have it for your family, yes. And anything else you'd like to say.

AJ: Yes, I...

NL: ...but about Łódź, I certainly will look into it...

AJ: Please.

NL: ...and see if we can trace these people, they were in Vienna-- tell me again what year?

AJ: In 19-- we were in Vienna. They were-- I don't know if they were in Vienna.

NL: They were in Łódź. They came back to Łódź?

AJ: No, they-- again, I will say that my parents said that, "If we survive..."

NL: Right.

AJ: ... "the war"...

NL: Right.

AJ: "We must meet each other."

NL: Right.

AJ: I can give you the names of this persons because maybe this is important in your research.

NL: Let me just copy them down.

AJ: Okay, please.

NL: Alright. This is...

AJ: This is the boy whose, who was sleeping with me.

NL: Right. I'm going to turn this off.

AJ: Alright. Yes, when I talk to my father about all this tragedy, all this experience, I asked him, "Did you make any efforts to meet this people again?" And he said, "Yes, I made efforts," and he showed me this documents, plus the letter from the President Ben Gurion and he said to me, "That's it." The most important fact to me is that they were alive, nothing more important to me. I didn't went back looking for them or-- of course, I would be very happy to meet them now.

NL: Of course. And what was Josefa's husband's name?

AJ: I don't know.

NL: You don't know.

AJ: I don't know her name, her husband's name. I don't know if she was even marriage-- married, I don't know.

NL: Was there any other person...

AJ: Nothing, I don't have.

NL: ...whose name you have-- just Josefa Landau...

AJ: Yes, yes.

NL: ...and they changed the name to...

AJ: Wolowski.

NL: Wol, wo...

AJ: Wolowski, W-O-L-O-W-S-K-I.

NL: Very good. That was the name that was used...

AJ: Yes, this was the so-called deck name.

NL: The deck name, yes. Now, do you want to say a little about the period after the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and then your life up until the regular war uprising in '44...

AJ: Yes.

NL: ...Mr. Jurkiewicz?

AJ: Yes, yes.

NL: Yes.

AJ: There is no comparison between uprising in ghetto and uprising in Warsaw in '44. There is no comparison between Jews, *Gehenna* and Holocaust and tragedy of Polish nation or French nation or German nation or Russian nation. There is no comparison. Simply because Jews were in a ghetto. They were in a prison. We had forests, we had rivers; we had some freedom, some chance of survival...

NL: And arms.

AJ: Some chance of fight.

NL: Of fighting, yes. And an army.

AJ: Yes, these people didn't have nothing but death. They were facing like today we are facing the wall in Jerusalem and crying against this wall, and maybe in my life I will go there and I will cry. As Christian, maybe with him, maybe with children to show them, because this is history. This is the heritage of human survival and I will cry.

NL: At least try to cry.

AJ: You know, because simply they faced a wall they didn't have any chance to go through the wall, to jump, to go back, nothing.

NL: No retreat.

AJ: No retreat. It's just a wall and you must die and they died.

NL: They died.

AJ: Millions. We died too, of course. But, but the way that they were dying and I am talking about dying in concentration camps because there, there were many nationalities who were dying. I am talking about ghetto, where you don't get any chance,

any chance at all. So to survive before ghetto and during ghetto, to survive was a miracle. [unclear]...

NL: Did you see the ghetto after it was totally destroyed?

AJ: Of course, I was there.

NL: You were there?

AJ: I was looking, I was smelling the bodies who were burning there. We were there every day, during night no because they, there was a period they would kill you on the street, but during the day, anytime, all the time, we were around there, maybe somebody will come from a hole, maybe somebody would ask for help, cry for help. We were-- teared apart we couldn't help them, we couldn't fight with them.

NL: Were there any living creatures in that rubble, let's say in May-- June of '43?

AJ: Nothing, nothing, it was just completely destroyed, burned down. I was looking, when, when, you know, when they started to-- what they started to do is, they first burned it and then they put dynamite and they just-- the place was just like big rubble...

NL: Rubble.

AJ: A city of rubble.

NL: A city of rubble.

AJ: That's it. And the smell, you know, the smell all around, you knew that this is the ghetto. The finale of ghetto was the smell, and that's it.

NL: That was the end.

AJ: It was the end.

NL: You had no connection at all after that with any Jews from Poland? In '44?

AJ: After the Warsaw uprising this was-- these people, my father was still in contact with them because they was in the villages. My father tried to rescue some musicians, Jewish musicians with success.

NL: In Warsaw?

AJ: In Warsaw, with success.

NL: They had [unclear].

AJ: Because Germans, you see-- my father told me always that you could talk a German to help Jew, you could. Germans, some of them were sensitive.

NL: The German officers, army...

AJ: Army.

NL: Not SS?

AJ: Even SS because...

NL: Really?

AJ: ...my father said that he helped-- Henri Rapacki was a famous violinist, Jew.

NL: How do you spell his last name?
AJ: R-A-P-A-C-K-I.
NL: A violinist?
AJ: A violinist.
NL: From Warsaw?
AJ: From Warsaw.
NL: And Father helped to save...?
AJ: And he was-- yes, Father saved his life and who saved his life was an officer, a German SS officer who would come to the restaurant to hear him playing.
NL: Oh my.
AJ: To hear this guy playing. He played with, he played with soul, with spirit, with heart, nothing else was in his play.
NL: Oh, and the German officer was a music lover...
AJ: And this German officer-- I don't know him. My father said to me that he would come and he would listen to this guy play.
NL: And he knew he was Jewish?
AJ: And my father...
NL: Did the officer know?
AJ: I don't know if he knew...
NL: Oh.
AJ: If he knew, but my father would have this people-- make contact with this people because of underground army, because of-- that sometimes you could ask them for favor. They were sometimes...
NL: Human.
AJ: Human sometimes, they were humans. I know a Jewish survivor, one of my best friends who survived, oh my God, Oświęcim. Dachau.
NL: Auschwitz.
AJ: Auschwitz. She survived, thanks to an German soldier.
NL: A soldier, yes, you hear of some stories like that.
AJ: And she survived and after the war, immediately after war when the armies came, he would be killed. He would be executed and she said, no way. He will be, he will be not executed because he not saved only my life...
NL: But others.
AJ: ...he saved other's lives...
NL: It's important.
AJ: ...and he-- he survived, his family survived.
NL: It's important to know those stories, yes.
AJ: Not only because he survived but to me important is that Jews had an inside heart, a human heart which, it was not her vendetta, revenge, kill everybody, no.
NL: No, no.

AJ: If somebody helped me...

NL: You must acknowledge it.

AJ: ...give the same back, because future, because future generations.

NL: Yes, there must be...

AJ: We cannot live in hate. Look what's going on right now in Lebanon, for example.

NL: Terrible, yeah, terrible. Afghanistan.

AJ: They would destroy themselves.

NL: Yeah. [unclear]

AJ: So, so this was Warsaw uprising.

NL: Now in '44...

AJ: Then in '44 for a short period of time. I was living in the center city of Warsaw. So we were, we were close to the main post office. I was living on the corner of Marzsałkowska, Żulyenskego [phonetic], Poznańska, in this corner here, and this corner was very shortly after the beginning of uprising was under German...

NL: Control.

AJ: ...control and they just took all of us out. But with Jews they wouldn't do it. With Jews they would just execute them on the street, like in Warsaw Ghetto.

NL: So where did they take you?

AJ: They took us to Pruszków first, to a camp in Pruszków. From Pruszków they took us to Poznań, this was already a German territory...

NL: Posen.

AJ: Posen. And from Posen they took us to Vienna, actually not in center of Vienna. We were digging in holes for *Luftshutzbunker* for air shelters.

NL: How long did you stay there, Mr. Jurkiewicz?

AJ: From oh, 1944, to the end of 1944 to the end of the war.

NL: To the end of the war?

AJ: To the end of the war. Yes.

NL: And then afterwards?

AJ: And then we stayed there. We didn't move back to Poland immediately, we-- because my father was trying to give me some education in Vienna. He realized that this is the place, the city where, where I could be really well educated and he was right. I started my musical education in Vienna in '48. My mother, under great pressure, my grandmother, she said, "I am going back my mother she needs me," she was sick.

NL: She had stayed in Poland?

AJ: Yes, she stayed in Poland, and we moved, I mean-- we means myself, my sister and my mother-- my father should come-- after us, with the next transport-- there were transports coming back and he never came back because we told him not to come back.

NL: Because Poland was already...

AJ: Because already in Stalin's, you know...

NL: ...Communist

AJ: ...grip and it was unbelievable, unbelievable terror and I asked my father, "Please, take us out, what you did? What a tremendous mistake you did," because we were already on the list to em-- of emigration to Canada...

NL: Oh my.

AJ: So the transport to Poland left Vienna in May and we should wait until July to go into Canada.

NL: But it was because of your mother...

AJ: My grandmother, yes.

NL: ...her feeling of responsibility.

AJ: Yes, yes.

NL: So then your life then took a...

AJ: Changed completely.

NL: ...downward turn. Did you stay in school in Poland?

AJ: Yes, I started higher education in music in Poland, but in the beginning we were prosecuted because of course my father didn't return so he is the enemy of the nation. Besides in Gdynia it was a special terror because of-- you know, it was a harbor, it was a direct contact with all the West, so the terror was tremendous. And in one point, I officially declared my father dead...

NL: Oh my.

AJ: ...to-- so they would leave us alone.

NL: How were you harassed? At school?

AJ: Oh, it was harassed for my mother. First of all my mother, because she couldn't get a job. Everywhere you have to write down everything...

NL: About your past?

AJ: About your past, about your husband and when they agree that the husband is in the West that's it. That, that was it.

NL: So she couldn't get work?

AJ: No, then myself I was also harassed. I was arrested once by a U.B. It means *Urząd Bezpieczeństwa* [Office of Security]. It means, security...

NL: Police.

AJ: Security police, yes. And they asked me just about Father. Who was your father? Why he's not with you, where he is? And this was all day, all night and finally the next day, in the morning they said, all right you are too young to go to jail. So you better start your socialistic education. And I started socialistic education.

NL: [unclear]

AJ: In order to survive.

NL: At a musical institute?

AJ: At a musical institute, the education was mainly connected with, belonging to the youth organization.

NL: I see.

AJ: So next day, I came straight to the school. I said, I would like to be a member of, of whatever, I don't remember...

NL: *Komsomol*.³

AJ: No, not this was not *Komsomol*. We were, we were never told that we are communists, never.

NL: I see.

AJ: Never, we were told that we are socialists. All right?

NL: Interesting.

AJ: So we were not lucky enough to be communists. Socialists-- the communists at the highest level of social development. Socialists means they were under like *üntermensch* and *ü-- übermensch*.

NL: *überüber*. [laughs]

AJ: Yes. So anyway...

NL: How long did you stay in school then?

AJ: Until 195-- my Bisterium [phonetic] I achieved in 1958. In 1959 I started my job in cooperation with [unclear] Opera as assistant conductor...

NL: In, in...

AJ: In Wrocław.

NL: In...

AJ: ...so I moved from Gdańsk...

NL: ...in Breslau.

AJ: ...to Wrocław, to Breslau, right.

NL: So then you began your true professional career?

AJ: True professional musical career.

NL: Was it a fulfilling life by then? Was it...

AJ: It was very difficult for me. It is still very difficult. First of all, we lost everything.

NL: All of your property?

AJ: All our property. We didn't have money. I didn't have money to buy score, to buy records, so, so...

NL: It was under a great hardship.

AJ: ... it was a very, very great hardship.

NL: Mother, was she ever able to get work?

³Russian abbreviation of Vsesoyuzny Leninsky *Kommunistichesky Soyuz Molodyozhi*, English: All-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth, organization for young people aged 14 to 28 that was primarily a political organ for spreading Communist teachings and preparing future members of the Communist Party.

AJ: She was finally able to get work and she helped me tremendously but how could I ask her for-- as an adult...

NL: Father, Father stayed in Vienna?

AJ: ...and my father helped me also, a little bit. He was...

NL: He still stayed in Vienna?

AJ: No, he emigrated from Vienna through-- he didn't come to Canada, he went first to Argentina.

NL: Oh my.

AJ: He bought a home for us and he started to-- the steps to take us from Poland, but it was impossible at this time, so he moved from Argentina to United States to Philadelphia and from here he sent us all necessary papers and we got everything from the United States government to immigrate, but Polish government said no. Finally they released my mother. So she emigrated from Poland to my father.

NL: What year was that?

AJ: It was in '60s.

NL: In the '60s. So they then were united.

AJ: Yes.

NL: But you couldn't leave?

AJ: But I couldn't leave. I was already permanent conductor of the Opera. I was already registered at the American embassy to move here and I had everything ready, but Polish government always said, "No, emigration is forbidden for you," so finally I took a chance and I just run away.

NL: In '72 or...

AJ: In '72, yes, I was music director.

NL: You just you...

AJ: I just...

NL: ...slipped over the border?

AJ: No, no that was a way to, to-- a legal way to leave Poland temporarily.

NL: I see. I see.

AJ: So I did this and I never returned.

NL: Are you able to be in touch with your sister?

AJ: Yes, she was here.

NL: She was able to come?

AJ: Oh yes, she was two years, three years ago here for vacation.

NL: She doesn't want to come?

AJ: No, because she feels that this is too late for her to start a life in the United States.

NL: She married?

AJ: She's married, she-- and her husband is a sick person, heart problems and she said that here it's no way, how could I survive with it, with a sick person, sick man?

NL: But at least you see her and you are able to write.

AJ: Yes, and she saw her, her parents and so she was here almost a year and then she went back.

NL: And how did you meet David?

AJ: David, I met David several years ago.

NL: Here, in Philadelphia.

AJ: Here in Philadelphia. He came from Soviet Union as an immigrant and he was introduced to me through another Jewish composer, American Jewish composer, a Jaffe. I played his symphonic work.

NL: You knew about his work before you met him?

AJ: We are talking right now about Jaffe. I am not talking about David.

NL: I see.

AJ: I played with Orchestra Society a work written by this young American-Jewish composer. The work is, is based on three poems written by a young Jewish poet in ghetto, and it struck me so deep that the poems are so beautiful, so beautiful, I immediately understood the every word.

NL: You were there.

AJ: I was there.

NL: Yes.

AJ: And besides music we speak, it's a beautiful score.

NL: This is J-A-F-F-E?

AJ: I will show you because this is a unique-- maybe you even know-- anyway, I performed this with the Orchestra Society.

NL: I see.

AJ: He sent this tape to Rome, Italy for-- and he wanted the famous Rome prize for this and he went for a year of study and before he left United States, he invited me to a farewell party where I met David.

NL: Yes, I see. Mr. Jurkiewicz would you want to say a few words to a new generation about-- to give them some message as a result of your experiences and this means, of course, to your own children because we'll give you copies of these tapes?

AJ: I, I, first of all, I liked to be called new generation.

NL: [laughter] Sorry [laughter] I better rephrase it myself.

AJ: No, no, you are also, also.

NL: But let's say to your children's generation.

AJ: To my children's generation and not only to my children, to all children's generation.

NL: But I mean, all the children of their generation.

AJ: Yes, love each other, respect each other, respect the differences between each other, be friends and live in peace. Don't kill because God created us and gave us life and respect this life. Don't kill and with this in my mind and my heart, I am going to

hold my line and I will teach my children, and all children, that the most precious gift given us from our Creator is life, love and freedom.

NL: Thank you very much, Mr. Jurkiewicz.

AJ: You're very welcome.

NL: Thank you, thank you.

AJ: [Kissing noise]

NL: Thank you, thank you.

AJ: [Kissing noise]

NL: [Noise] Excuse me.

[Tape two, side one ended; interview ended.]