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An interview with
Eliyahu Hertz (Edward Skowronsky)

Interviewer: **Tomasz Czajkowski**

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My original family name was Hertz. I was born on April 20, 1920. My father, Jan Hertz, was an officer in the Polish army. He had a sword, a present from Marshal Pilsudski. Army officers were coming to our home. Many of them came to ask my father for his help in personal matters. In 1939 my father was the head of a delegation which collected money for the Polish army!

I had three brothers. Max was a lawyer, Dolfi was a doctor and Kurt immigrated to Israel before the war. We had an adopted sister, Minka. At Lublin I have learnt in "Gimnasia Humanistica". I was interested in Sport. We were living in 10 Niecala Street. We had very good relations with the neighbors.

Almost all of my childhood friends were Polish. My best friends were Tadzyk and Leszek Pitynski.

At the war my brother Dolfi joined to the Polish army in France and Leszek Pitynski joined to Sikorski army in England. Leszek was an officer and was killed at the battles of Monte Casino in Italy. Before he was killed, he had moved with his army through Palestine and met there with my brother Kurt.

I remember how the Germans entered Lublin. Aktzias against Jews had begun. Jews were taken to forced labor camps. They were beaten. Jews had to wear the badge.

My brother Max and I ran away to Warsaw, carrying forged papers of Polish. We looked like Polish and spoke only Polish, so no one could identify us.

I was a member of AK resistance movement in Warsaw, and nobody there knew I am a Jew. If my good Polish friends knew I am a Jew, I don't know how they would have been reacted.

In the streets we saw Polish people holding bottles of strong drinks. They had got it for handing over a Jew to the authorities. Never have I been suspected. People were absolutely convinced that my family was belonged to Polish nobility.

In Warsaw I worked as an interpreter for Kompas, a German company that collected IRS from Polish. By an order from AK I had moved to another German office, where I worked as a messenger. My job at the office was transferring the bookkeeper all the letters received at that day, but on my way to her office I was stopping at our AK organization. Our people opened, read and re-closed the letters – and I continued doing my job: transferring the letters to their destination.

One day, while I was in the street, a sound of explosion was heard. Someone threw a grenade. Policemen came, closed all the streets, caught whoever was in the street and put them

into Pawiak prison. After two weeks I was sent to **Auschwitz**. From there I was transferred to **Gross-Rosen** camp in Silesia.

Then I was sent to work in **Halbau** camp. In Halbau there was a factory for airplanes engines. In all these camps they treated me as a gentile. No one knew I am a Jew.

In the camp the hunger was great. There were Tatars who had eaten dead people. They lit bonfire and ate.

The commander of the camp had a dog that became close to me. After five or six days without eating, people came and told me: "Edek, get the dog and we'll do something." The dog came close to me, I caressed his head. The people got the dog and ate it.

The camp commander ran wild out of anger and shouted: "Where is my dog?" He put us in order and threatened "Every ten man will be executed!" I took the blame. The commander hit me and ordered to close me in a basement with no food so I would die of hunger. After two days the camp commander was replaced. The new commander let me out of the basement. The camp was evacuated. It was already the end of the war.

They sent us to **Buchenwald**, and from there we were led to **Bergen Belsen**.

The British freed Bergen Belsen. A Swedish delegation came by and transferred camp prisoners to a hospital in Sweden.

I was very sick. The head nurse got three shots of Penicillin for all the patients in the hospital. She chose me and gave one of the shots... I recovered slowly. Me and her and her husband became friends, so they brought me to their home and took care of me. From their home I made contact with my brothers.

My parents and my sister were left in Lublin ghetto and from there were sent to Belzec.

Sometimes I dream of that time. Then I am almost lost.

I don't forgive the Germans.

I can't forgive because of my parents... because of the suffering I saw, because of the concentration camps. I was there and saw how people were killed.

In Israel I'm a member at the organization of former concentration camp inmates.

Jews and Polish used to live together. All my friends were Polish. We played football together. There was no difference between us. In 1937-1938 I started feeling the hatred to Jews.

I would like to meet Tadzyk, my childhood friend, but I don't know how to look for him. I don't know if he's alive. He was my friend... we were always together.

I don't miss Poland. I lost there everything. How should I remember Poland when I saw there such bad things? I saw how Polish kill Jews. "Should kill the Jew," that's what was said. Not to me, but to others. I lived among the Polish as a son to a Polish nobility family. Among these I had been with I didn't see love to Jews and didn't hear one good word for Jews.

Transcript of the interview in Polish:

Teatr NN

Translation from Polish to Hebrew:

Sara Barnea

Translation from Hebrew to English:

Shmulik Avidar