

29 April, 1985

Yad Vashem
Martyrs' and Heroes'
Remembrance Authority
Har Hazikaron, Jerusalem
Israel

Mr. Ira (Israel) Crandell
(Krajndels)
182 Brighton Ave.
Downsview, Ontario
Canada
M3H 4E4

Att: Dr. Mordechai Paldiel
Director
Dept. for the Righteous

Dear Dr. Paldiel:

Re: Pastuszka, Tadeusz-Poland(3826)

Attached is my testimony in the form of a story, as per
your request of July 27, 1984. Sorry for the delay.

Sincerely

I. Crandell

Mr. I. Crandell

In September 1939, on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, both young and old were preparing themselves and hoping for a good year. The sun shone brightly on the city of Ostrowiec, the place of my birth. The skys were blue, denoting a symbol of freedom for the future. But in our hearts we thought of the future and we couldn't comfort ourselves anymore. We broke down because we heard that the Germans were marching into Poland. We knew that the Polish army was not strong enough to hold them back. Five days later the Germans arrived at our city.

The Germans drove into Ostrowiec on motorcycles. We heard their wild cries and saw their murderous faces. We were able to see and hear what was happening through small openings at the window and by looking through the fence. All of the Jews hid in the attics and wood storage shacks. During the first twenty four hours of being in our city, the Germans killed seven innocent Jews. Later when they caught Jews they placed them into forced labour. They cut beards off of elderly men and murderously attacked people. People who were caught and sent away were never seen again. They disappeared.

Later on the Germans appointed Jewish committees, and Jewish police. These committees of Jews and police, had to carry out the commands of the SS murderers. When the SS asked for money, work or items (ie. fur coats), they received all of their requests through the Jewish committee. I remember when two of the SS men called "Peter" and "Bruner" came into our shoe store. They found me there, beat me up and told me to tell my parents to bring money to the Jewish committee.

It didn't take too long before they made a ghetto, that included making the city limits smaller. They forced people to stay inside the ghetto, and didn't let anyone out of the ghetto. At every ghetto border they put up signs, which stated that anyone crossing over would be killed.

The ghetto was continuously made smaller and smaller, until it became evacuated. On a Shabat in Mar Cheshvan in 1942, we became aware that on the next day, they were planning to expel all of the Jews. It was a black Shabat for us. Small children cried. It seemed as if they had a premonition about their sad ends. It was unbelievable how little children could feel such a thing, but this is a fact.

Seeing the trouble that tomorrow would bring, my parents advised me to leave home and go to work in the iron factory. They felt that maybe I could remain alive by being a worker. It was said at the time, that those that worked would remain alive. Before leaving home, my whole family bid me a tearful farewell. My grandfather Yona, my grandmother Rochel, my mother Chana Yehudis, my father Avraham Yishaya, and my sister Sarah Leah. My grandfather Yona put his hands on my head and blessed me. He foresaw that I would live through these terrible times, and that he wouldn't. He also showed me where all of the valuables were hidden.

I marched down to the factory with my brother-in-law Faavel Greener at approximately midnight. We wore the shoes of soldiers, so that it would appear as if we were workers going to our jobs. We arrived at the factory and began to work.

The following night we found out that a small number (several hundred) of young Jews from our city had been chosen to work at our steel factory. They told us that the Germans, Lithuanians, and Ukranian murderers expelled all of the people from their houses. Old people who were bedridden, were shot in their beds. We also found out that all the others were sent in closed wagons to Treblinka to be gassed. The Poles showed their happiness that the Jews had been evacuated.

After a days work at the factory, we found our sleeping quarters in the attic together with several hundred others. We slept in our clothes and there were no washing facilities. In the morning we were given a coffee and a piece of bread. At lunch we were given a slice of bread and watery soup.

While we were at the factory the Nazis made two more searches of the city and found more Jews who had been hiding (ie. in the attics, behind false walls or in the cellars). Some Jews who had been hiding with Polish families were thrown out by them. Part of these Jews were shot on the spot, and the rest were sent to Treblinka and other camps.

The Nazis falsely advised Jews to travel to Sandomierz. The Nazis said a Jewish state would be developed there. In the end, those people who left to Sandomierz were no better off than the others; they were also killed.

The Rabbi of Ostrowiec, Rabbi Yecheskel Halevi Halberstock was shot dead amidst sarcastic laughter.

A few weeks later, the Germans put up Barraks, several hundred kilometers from where we worked, and ordered us to live there. On the way to the barracks the Ukranian watchmen beat all of us. The barracks were filled with bedbugs and fleas. We were unable to sleep at night because of the bugs and the fleas biting us.

While at the factory, we were lined up from time to time and made to give up any possessions which we had. During one of these inspections the Nazis noticed several torn American dollars on the ground nearby some young men. These men were taken out and shot by the Ukranians. The Nazis also sent men out of the factory to Plażow, where there was a death camp. Very few survived.

We never knew what the next day would bring. Therefore, we decided to run away from the work camp in order to remain alive. On January 18, 1944 at about three or four o'clock in the morning a group of five of us escaped. Our little group included two Koplovitch brothers, Faavel Greener, Moshe Broker and myself.

We jumped over the fence at the fifth gate, not far from the Ukranian guardhouse. Either the guards didn't hear us, or pretended not to hear us, and we were successful in getting out. Our only "weapon" was a small pocket knife.

Our destination was to reach the farm of Pastuszka, which was eight kilometers from the factory. We were to join twelve people who had already been hiding in the dugout for about a year. Our food was to be purchased by Mr. Madej. His son in law was responsible for dropping the food off of his wagon, and Pastuszka was to pick up the food and bring it to us.

Moshe Broker was our leader, as he knew the way to Pastuszka. After passing through approximately four kilometers of fields, we decided to rest. Moshe Broker lit a cigarett. I paid him thirty golden American dollars. At the time this was worth about one hundred and eighty dollars of paper money. Moshe Broker took this money to pay for the food bought by Mr. Madej.

As we neared the farm, Pastuszka's dog Azor began to bark loudly. We didn't let this bother us. At the entrance to the stable stood a small goat. We entered the stable, lowered ourselves through some open planks, and descended down a ladder into the dugout. A small light burned in the dugout.

Conditions in the dugout, were of course very difficult. There was an abundance of fleas and lice. We all slept on our sides, and if someone wanted to roll over, he had to wake his neighbor.

We received a piece of bread and some soup every day. We prayed that we would have sufficient bread. There were times when Mr. Madej's son in law wasn't able to supply food. Our landlord Mr. Pastuszka never wanted to lend us potatoes or bread. During those times we went without food.

I was in the dugout for approximately one year, until the Russians arrived on January 17, 1945. The next day several of us went into Ostrowiec to see what was happening in the city. On the way back to Pastuszka we stopped in at Mr. Madej. He gave us a very large bread. We took this to the dugout and divided it amongst the seventeen of us.

As far as I know, the Madej family were the ones who advised Pastuszka to arrange for the dugout. Mr. Pastuszka was very poor and he used to say it's better to die from a bullet than from hunger. If it wasn't for Mr. Madej's family, we would not have been able to survive, because they arranged for our food.

We paid Pastuszka one thousand Zlotys a week. The Broker family told him that we are connected with the Partisans and that if he were to harm us, he would suffer. He also believed that we were armed.

Mr. Pastuszka had no neighbors, his house stood isolated. No one knew about us except for Mr. Pastuszka, his wife, Mr. Madej, Mrs. Madej, and his three children and son in law.

As soon as we were liberated, we had additional troubles. We couldn't buy food. The Polish anti semites wouldn't return our houses to us. They were inhabited by Poles. We had to live in an attic which had broken walls (smashed by the Nazis who had been looking for valuables). The cold January winds blew through the walls and windows. At night the low temperatures were unbearable, and we were suffering from hunger.

A short time later, the A.K. (Polish Army Underground) penetrated a house nearby which was inhabited by ten Jews who had returned from the work camps. Four people were shot to death. Others were wounded. The people who were killed were a mother and daughter from Lemberg, who were passing through and had spent the night at that house. The house had been the property of the Lederman family. The others killed were a girl by the name of Speigel and a boy of seventeen years named Spielman. They had recently returned from Auschwitz. My brother in law was badly wounded. A young girl whose last name was Adler was also wounded. The Poles caught the killers and they were later let loose unpunished.

At that point I decided to leave Poland.