

I sent to Joad Valler
March 1968

I was born in Lodz, Poland, June 12, 1909 and I lived there until September 1939. I am Jewish and married a Jew, Mieczyslaw Warchiwker in 1938.

At the beginning of the World War II my husband and I fled to the East of Poland and lived in Zdolbunow, Ukraine. In 1941 when the German Army occupied the city, my husband was shot in an action. *Aug 4/1*

*a German
newborn*
In October 1941 I was sent to a German Construction Company to report to work. I speak fluently German and I was interrogated by the head of the Firma Jung, Solingen, Baustelle in Zdolbunow, Herman Friedrich GRAEBE. He hired me for office work and I started on translations from German technical books into Polish for usage for Polish engineering staff.

Ing. Graebe came to Zd. a short time ago with a very small staff of German constr. workers and when I started to work the Firm started to enlarge. I noticed many Polish, Jewish and Ukrainian workers being sent in by the Labor Office and distributed to work. The quarters in an old, empty house were being renovated and office workers mowed with their desks all the time. *The carpenters were hammering all day.*

In order to make translating possibly at all in this disorder, the translating department, consisting of myself, another Jewish woman and one or two men was set up in a small room in a corner. In the same room was Mr. Graebe's desk and a drawing board for a draftsman.

We were mostly left to ourselves, as Mr. Graebe spent many hours daily on the construction side. At the time, when he was at his desk, people, mostly German workers and German officials were coming and going all the time. We worked from 9-6 and sometimes overtime. I became friendly with my coworker Mrs. Wolf, who ~~was shot~~ *her husband* lost her husband in the same action as I did. Mrs. Wolf had a daughter of ca 9 years old.

We commented often on the peculiar behavior of Mr. Graebe, who in contrast to all the other Germans behaved politely toward us and other Jewish workers, but we were rather suspicious and uneasy and speculated if he is not going to cause trouble for us. At this time Jews were being executed in mass actions all over the Ukraine and we knew of many cases, when they were shot on spot by the Germans for the smallest of causes.

One day in early November, 1941 when I came to work, I found out from others, that in Rowno (city about 10 miles from Zd.) a big action against Jews is taking place. Posters were being placed ordering all Jews, which did not have working papers to assemble with their possessions for "Resettling". This concerned mostly the women with the children, the old and the sick. At that time we did not believe in the promise of resettlement, which in most cases meant only a slaughter of Jews in mass graves. Few hours later we knew, that about 5,000 Jews are being led for killing in the outskirts of Rowno.

I also heard, that the night before one of the best Jewish carpenters came late in the evening to Mr. Graebe and asked him for a permit to go to Rowno in order to join his wife and child, which had to obey the order of resettlement. She stayed in Rowno with her parents, and a Jew was not allowed to leave the city limits.

I heard, that Mr. Gr. told the carpenter, that he would like to keep him, and was ready to take the man to Rowno at this late date and bring his wife and child to Zdolbunow. The carpenter agreed and Mr. Gr. took him by car to Rowno. When they reached the house, they found out, that the whole family left already and is in the assembly place, where all the other Jews are being grouped together. After further inquiry Gr. was told by some official, that because of the late hour it will not be possible to wake the people and look for the fa=

mily, but next day Graebe can get the wife and child to Zdold.

Mr. Graebe left that day and did not come back at 6 PM. We had earlier orders not to leave this room without locking, so after other employies left, ~~we-hade-to-wait~~. Mrs. Wolf and I hade to wait. Finally ing. Gr. came into the room, sat behind his desk and I noticed, that his face was distorted. We were friehgtened and pretendet, that we are still translating, but he got up and in a very violent way told us, that ~~they~~ the Jews are being killed in Rowno. This was not more news to us and we sat quietly. Mr. Graebe in a rage came to our table and asked in a angry voice, how we could stand it so calmly. He described in a chocking voice, how he saw the children shot and the brutality of the killing. I was almost paralised with fear but as he talked in a disrupted and uncoordinated voice it became obvious, that when he went to look for that women, the Germans directed him farther to follow the transport until he came to the oatskirts and saw the shooting itself and the ~~batting~~ which proceeded. Being a German with a paper from some authority he apparently newer had any trouble in following the transport, also no idea what he was actually getting into. He newer could find the woman and the child and as he was telling this to us, he repaeted several times, that he cannot tell this to carpenter, who is waiting for some news.

This went on for ca half haur. I did not believe in the begin nig in the sinserity of this outburst I also could not understand why does he behawe in this manner. At one ~~time~~ ^{since} I ventured a remark, that killing of the Jews is standard procedure (his countrymen came here'. He yelled back, that I am worse then Hitler. Mrs Wolf pulled me behind the table. From the looks of her, I gathered, that she was as shocked and bewildered as I was.

After few more minutes I began to think, that maybe, he really did not know what was going on and suggested, that I will go out and talk to the carpenter. He sat at the desk, put the head down and I left. When I came back, he was taking very angry to Mrs. Wolf and told us to leawe him alone.

Next morning he was very calm, greeted us and asked us to remain in the office at lunch. We did and he closed the door and said, that he will not stand by and look at what is happening to the Jews. He said, that he has a son, age 12 and no matter, what it is going to cost him, even his live, he is going to do something.

He said, that he does not know what he will do and how, but he realises, that he cannot do it by himself. He does not speak the languge of the country and he dos not believe, that he will have any assistance from his countrymen. He ~~sak~~ ^{asked} if we will be willing to help him and we agreed.

This was the beginning of a unending, couragious and absolutely dewoted activity od Mr. Graebe during the war years 1941-1944 on behawe of the persecuted Jews. All during that time he was in extreeme personal danger, including at the later stage as well his wife and his child. He had to finance many ventures and did it at his own expens. Becease of many emergency sytuations he had to work and travel at a time of illnesses, solely to help some jewish poeple to get away from danger. He was under constant tread of being apprehended by the Gestapo eather because of some misfortune in his actyvities or by the fact, that each of the persons involwed in the incriasing rescu apparatus represented danger, while arrested and forced to talk under torture.

During subsequent discussions it became obvious to Mr. Graebe, especially after long, premeditated talks with German officials, that the only way to help the Jews would be by establishing them as "Arians". This included not only false documents, but also living and working conditions where they would not be exposed to unnecessary check ups and consequent exposures. It could be done only by branching out the main Zdobunow Baustelle into small, not connected, far apart located Baustellen. Until it could be arranged it became important not to let the Jews in Zdobunow perish completely or to be decimated.

X through Higher office with any interest of Local Admin
~~Herr~~ Firma Jung worked for the German Army on a railroad assignment. This was considered of a utmost military importance. Ing. Gr. was assured of every assistance in order to speed up the work. He became befriended with the head of the German administration in Zd. Gebietskommissar Marschal and in a short time conveyed to him the idea, that because of the shortage of labor and in particular, skilled labor it will be imperative, that the Jews in Zd. be left to his disposal. The Jewish population in Zd. was ca 2.000. In this way he prevented a coming action which was scheduled for December 1941.

At about the same time Ing. Graebe opened a Baustelle in Rowno, where Mrs. Wolf with her child ~~went~~ supplied with Aryan papers went as a test case. Before she left contact was established with few Polish Ing. working in Zd. Firma Jung and one of them became assigned to Rowno. After few weeks they reported, that Rowno could be used as a transit place only, because of the proximity to Zd. and constant flow of people, who could detect the disguise. Mrs. Wolf had to be moved for that reason. She went to a new Baustelle in Kiwerce.

This was the beginning of opening and closing of different branches of the F-ma Jung. Some of them were operating as regular Baustellen with military contracts, labor force, office and German managers and foremen, which did not know about the implanted Jews. Some were fictitious and only had a room, address, stationary of the firm and were used for a quick and short hide out.

Through the grapevine word spread in Zdobunow and also Ostrog and Misocz about Ing. Graebe and people asked for help. The extent to which his activity was known between the Jews I find out only after the war, when many people whom I did not even know told me how he helped them to save their lives.

In order to facilitate the contact and progress of the rescue operation. I became a personal secretary and took care of incoming and outgoing messages.

One of the involved Jews, manager of few Baustellen and personal friend of Ing. Graebe suggested a Baustelle, which will be completely undetected in Zdobunow. Mr. Glas foresaw a time, when this will be necessary. This was a difficult thing to do, but finally in the middle 1942 that sort of a place was opened in Poltawa and it proved to be a success. It was a working Baustelle which contained later 12 Jewish people, including 2 children. Except for Mr. Glas, who died several years after the war, all the people are alive and Mr. Graebe is in contact with them. (Except for few people, which live in Poland and by choice or necessity still pass as non Jews and avoid contact.)

The Judenrat from Ostrog implored Mr. Graebe to open a Baustelle in order to protect the Jews. This was done and Mr. Graebe achieved postponing of the mass killings. The Jews in Misocz asked the same thing. Mr. Graebe was not able to do so, but transferred ca hundred Jews to the Rowno Baustelle, where they worked with the Jews from Rowno in F-ma Jung. Thus Misocz was spared the killing of the Jew at that time. In July 1942 during the final killing of the remaining Jews in Rowno Herr Gr. personally managed to take out the Jews from

Misotc, which worked in Rowno and bring them over to Zd. which still hade the ghetto alive. This was ~~a~~ particularly dangerous, because he had to be in Rowno qll night in mist of wild shooting.

~~During-all~~ At all times ing. G. was aware, that he cannot postpone the killing of the Jews for a long time. He tried desparatly to sawe as many, as possible by giving help, where possible. The Baustelle cowered only a part of fortunate Jews. Others were helped by travel permits, documents, transportation and money. There were many Jews, who wanted to escape the ghetto on their own, but lacked ~~any~~ possibilities.

Mr. Graebe was also completely aware of the enormity of crime committed by the Germans against the Jews and hawing day to day contact with the german offiffials was well informed not only how these crimes were committed, but also who were the resposible poeple behind it and to what extend they were committed. He told me many times, that he will try to bring them to justice when the time comes ~~for-it~~ and during talks with close friends, he ask us to remember in case, if he would not be alive.

~~=In=beginning=of=Oct.=1942~~

Ca March 1942 it was nessesary for me to obtain "arian" documents to continui the work I was doing. In October 1942 I was informed by friends, that I may be detected and I left to Poltawa Baustelle. 5 days later, on Oct. 13 the entire zdolb. Ostrog and Misotz ghettos were wiped out by shooting in massgraves. As I find out later Mr. Graebe still managed sawe few poeple and two of them came later to Poltawa.

After the destruction of the ghettos, ing. Greabe kept the Baustelle in Poltawa secret. Contact was establisched by telephone and trusted poeple were bringing money and instructions. Graebe came to Poltawa several times. During the 1943 and beginning 1944 we were forced to leave Poltawa before the German Armii retriected and kept going west. We were superwised closely by the Germans and finally did not know how to aavoid coming into Sdolb. again, as ordered by the Germans. Mr. Glas conveyed this to Gr. and in Febr. 1944, Gr. came to a small village, where we waited and under the authority of his presence, Brought us do Czernowiec-Rumania. There he established some nonexistent residence and left with me do Warshau to established a place of work. The next day the russian Army mowed sudenly to Chernowec, Mr. Greabe went to Germany, where the Zdolbunow Baustelle was evacuated and I stayed in Warsaw.

After several month I knew, that I have to leave Warsaw, got from Mr. Gr. trawel orders and went to Germany. And there I met jewish poeple, whom he brough with him.

When in Sept. 1944 the american Army approched our Baustelle inthe Eifel, Mr. Graebe prevented ear deportment into central Germany as ordered for all forein workers. He got in touch with the amer. War Crime Commision, where he worked for ca 2 years in Wiesbaden.

~~After+his++statement+about+the++Mass+shootinh+in=Dubno=1942 before=the=Nuremberg=trial=~~

He testified before the Nurenberg trial about the crimes against the jewish poeple. After his statement about the schooting of 5.000 Jews in Dubno, 1942 which he witnessed appeared in the press Mrs. Graebe let him know, that his son was beaten up in Solingen and once almost choked to death. Mr. Glas felt, ~~as~~ that it was not safe for the Graebes to remain in Germany. With the help of some friends and tthe JOINT, the Greabes Family left Germany for USA in 1949: wher Mr. Gr. started to work in construcion field in San Francisco. I went to the US in 1947 and liwed in Ohio and later in New York.