

Film Studios Czołowka and TVN presents

film by Mariusz Malinowski

The grandmother has always said: „what's your name?” - „ Alojzy ”. I was not pleased with that, as when there were two Alojzys, one must be lost. And so it happened. But if it happened it was because God wished it so. Now you must share your life with the father, in half. And since then my soul has been halved.

THE CHILDREN OF THE WEHRMACHT

Alojzy Lysko: when I was a boy I asked my mother: „ Mammy, when will my Dad come home from the war? ”He will come, don't you worry,” she said. And one time I asked her: “But what does he look like, my dad? ” Then my mother went out and brought back a jar and she took out a photo of my father in a German uniform. And she said, “I hid it in the manure heap, because if the Russians had seen it they would have shot us.” And what I am holding in my hand are documents from the farm, they were in the house behind the rafter. Valid documents which spoke about legal rights, who the owner was, who had the right to the farm. And so hidden behind the rafter it was preserved.

I could see grandmother always sitting on a small stool peeling potatoes and crying. I asked her why she was crying and she told me she was crying for my father. And she also said he was fighting in the war, but that he would come. “Go to the gate and wait for him.” I learnt from a friend that other children were also waiting, but not by their gates. They would all go to a bridge across the river Gostyń. This group of expectant children would run in the direction of this bridge. And, there were such happy cases, when a father returned. Our neighbour, Antoni Sosna, came back from Russian captivity. But when we saw him first we were frightened of him. He was not a man. He was a ghost. Hairy, dirty, emaciated. And I remember, everyone sat at his feet, and the boys held on to him. One held him by his hands, the other by his legs. And because I had no father I also wanted to share their joy, so I grabbed his **thumb**.

Later in school it turned out that the majority of us were the orphans of killed soldiers. We stood

out with such strange names as Helmut, Engiel, Edeltrauda, Ydla, Erna. In order to make some money, my mother had to sell some of the farm country victuals, and to take them to so-called mill-towns, that is to the cities. The other widows of Wehrmacht soldiers did the same. And one day, these women were stopped, and so was my mum. And some civilian, most probably a UB-owiec (a security official), but I didn't know then what a UB-owiec was. A man, in any case, wanted to check what these women were carrying in those huge bags. And one woman didn't want to open the bags, because everything was all nicely packed inside. And he just kicked it. And there were eggs, a lot of eggs, and he had cracked many of them. And then she let out an animal roar, I remember it well, such an animal roar, at the top of her voice towards everyone who was at the station "I shall go to church and pray for a new war, so that when it ends your women will suffer as we do." And she just burst out crying.

A Polish propaganda film from 1961 in the Russian version

Silesia, the industrial centre of Poland, a land of coal and steel, homeland of the Polish working classes. A part of this land was taken away for several decades from the Homeland, oppressed by Prussian profiteers and militarists. Silesia is greeting its army! The Polish army is made of the people, is close to the people, and is greatly loved.

Alojzy Lysko: This longing of ours was so great that we decided to honour our fathers a memorial. For ourselves we chose a grove of the Bojszowski forest, surrounded with white birches. We counted these birches and decided that this number was more or less on a par with the number of those said to have been killed in Bojszów. At the time it was said that the war had taken about one hundred people.

There was a kind of strange conspiracy of silence, no one talked about it. Only sometimes at home... but publicly... God forbid. No one ever looked to recall the memory of our fathers. We wanted for our fathers to exist. Someone will be passing by this forest and will see, he will return, he will say, other people will gather together and they will be able to read and say, "aha, these are the men who were killed in the German army."

Józef Kłyk, an amateur film-maker from Bojszów: I remember, when I was a boy we went to the barber and he would cut our hair in the Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth) style, because he still had the one trimmer going in this direction, so we all came out with the same shorn style. But before he sheared us we would be taken to all the fronts of Europe. Since Jasiński without his hand and Noras without his leg were there. Everyone had a story to tell. One had been in Kriegsmarine, the other in the Luftwaffe, this one there had fought in the East, that one in the West. Fronts rolled from one side to the other. When the door opened and they didn't know the person who entered, the battle ceased and silence fell. Only when they were sure they could keep going on with their story did they continue talking about the war.

Alojzy Lysko: these searches for my father left a certain mark on me. So when I grew up I was very interested in the lives of people, especially those who'd lived through the war.

Augustyn Stolarski, a former Wehrmacht soldier: We were packed off to the front to Yugoslavia to the cavalry, which meant the partisans.

A German propaganda film from 1943.

New German divisions composed of highly trained young soldiers, making their departure to the front, being bid farewell to in their homeland. These young regiments received the best equipment.

Antoni Stolarski: a former Wehrmacht soldier: But in Pырzyce the SS stopped us on the tracks. And, these armies could not reach agreement, because they had been ordered to travel to Yugoslavia, the transport was on its way, and the SS demanded that everything be unloaded. And one night they told us to get off the train. And there we were by ourselves, and the morning light came, and we met with the Russkis. There were 162 in our company, we were so-called pioneers. We were supposed to cut down the trees to slow down the tanks. And all 162 of us came face to face with the tanks. There we were in open ground. Two of us survived. Myself and a non-commissioned officer who had been shot in the left arm. Everyone else had been wiped out.

Marta Krzemień, niece of a former Wehrmacht soldier: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen. Eternal Father, I offer you the body, blood and the soul of your beloved son and our Lord, Jesus Christ, for the salvation of our sins and of the entire world.

We walk here to these graves because my mother had a brother. Krzysiek came here on leave and said, "Marta I don't want to go to war, for if I go I will never come back. Hide me somewhere here. And my mother said, "Son, if I gave you shelter we would all end up in the concentration camp, because they would punish us that you had deserted. So he went and never come back. And my mother said, "Jesus, my brother also lies somewhere here, we don't know where." And then I say, you know what mum, it is here that we will come and where will dress up as befitting. But she died on me, and I was left alone. Often she had traveled there and cried with a wistful voice.

Alojzy Lysko: We were all interested, and I in particular wanted to know who was in those graves and I started asking around the village. And so I came by August Uszok, who lived in the first house to the east in Bojszów. When the Russians had made their push, German soldiers took shelter in his house, asking for a hot drink. But reconnaissance announced that Russians were already close by and so they all bolted in the direction of the forest. A young boy-soldier of 16 or 17 years old with such a girlish face and a blue scarf remained behind and just looked at the mug of hot milk with longing, and then he made his escape. Two months passed and according to Mr August they had buried more of the bodies in the forest, and at some point he noticed this blue scarf. And when I got this story out of him, this boy became very close to me, because I could see in him my uncle Paweł who was also a young boy when he was killed somewhere near Vitebsk.

Father Andrzej Maślanka: I was sorting through the parish archive when a sheet of paper fell into my hands. I think that it had been written in pencil, I don't remember exactly. So out of curiosity I read it. I saw the Lysko surname, and since I had already been the curate for a year I knew Alojzy Lysko. And I saw the look in his eye on reading the piece of paper. He said, "It is a letter from my Dad." He kissed this letter with tears in his eyes and he told me, "Thank you very much, father. This changes everything. This changes completely my knowledge of the death of my dad."

Alojzy Lysko: the Letter. Rusland, October 2, 1943, my beloved wife and my Alojzy. My greetings. May Jesus Christ be praised. I am writing to you, my wife, on a beautiful Sunday. But here I lie in a Russian field, in a ditch, and I am writing this letter with great fear, because bullets are whistling above my head. And I am writing to you my wife. Do not worry that I do not answer you. Everyday I must do a twenty kilometer march, and the air is filled with bullets. Of an evening I am too weary to do anything. My soul is burdened, as I've just lost my best friend from civilian times, Ludwik Krzemień, he died in the Caucasus and I shall never see him again. But what can we do, since this is the God's judgment. Dear wife, do not desire a lot, as I do not desire any riches any more. I only ask God to let me return to you safely. Give our little boy a hug for me, And now I'm writing that when my brother gets in touch, pass my regards to him and give me his post number. I am also sending best wishes to all those at home as well as to our relatives and our neighbours. Good bye and see you soon. Gefreiter Alojzy Lyzko."

Alojzy Lysko: My father's friend, Ludwik Krzemień was sent to fight in the Caucasus. He wrote that he could hear the Bojszów bells chime from those peaks there. So one day I thought that when I rang those bells, my father, somewhere or other in the East, would hear them. And so I rang the bell for five years. Until it broke.

I often look back at what I achieved. I am not ashamed of my past. I became a councilor in Bojszów when I was 20 years old. Every session began with my being shouted at. It was a stain that I had a father in Wehrmacht I admitted to this. What's more, I looked to honour the memory of my father in public! I wrote a book, which led to me being publicly criticised. Similarly, when I was a Member of Parliament I was also slightly afraid, that after this famous scandal with the grandfather of Donald Tusk somebody would also find my surname and make me a whipping post.

September 3 1939 in Bojszów was like the apocalypse. Tanks from Pszczyna began bombarding the village. Everything was ablaze: barns and homesteads. The horses were crazed, the cattle were roaring, children were crying. They herded men up against a wall. Hands up. There was old Wiarus among them, who had fought in the First World War, and he said, "Pray. They are not the kind of Germans I knew". Here a machine gun is waiting, someone comes and says, "Don't shoot, they are not fighters!"

Helena Uszok, wife of a former Wehrmacht soldier: in September when the war broke out, it already came from the district offices that my Robert was to join the Polish Army, because we still weren't married. But in September the Polish army... well, this war didn't last long. And the Germans took them into captivity. They took him to Germany and I followed. It was in Bajer, but as to the town I no longer remember. And on February 8, 1942 we got married. At least, a marriage ceremony was held. And that was it. And on March 20 the Germans took him into their ranks.

Alojzy Lysko: A war is going on. What does the son of an insurgent do... and what's more a Silesian insurgent

Wiktor Piekorz a former Wehrmacht soldier: When a Silesian insurgent saw what was coming... he legged it. They went to the Ruskies... to the East.

Alojzy Lysko: And what then?

Wiktor Piekorz, a former Wehrmacht soldier: And there they met a soldier, who told them straight, "Don't go farther, cos' you'll never come back." And so they went back. It took them three weeks to get home. Within two days they had to report to the police in Bieruń. But my father never came back from Bieruń because they had taken him. He later let us know that he was in Buchenwald.

Marta Kocurek, a citizen of Bojszów: My grandfather was put in a camp because he was Polish, because he had been an insurgent. And they took everyone and kept them for some time in the church in Bieruń. Later they took them away. My grandfather was sent to Dachau and there he remained. There they beat him and tortured him. There was no salvation for him. He died.

Alojzy Lysko: Were you registered for the Volkslista?

Wiktor Piekorz, a former Wehrmacht soldier: In 1942 I was just 20 years old. And I got this letter to fill in. It's not that I wanted to fill it in and become a German. It was just that everyone who had got

the letter had to fill it in.

Prof. Ryszard Kaczmarek, University of Silesia: One was not a Volksdeutscher by choice. It wasn't like you could choose, as was the case in the General Governorship. You were a Volksdeutscher based on the decision of a German clerk. Everyone living here, whether they wanted to be on the Volkslista or not, was obliged to fill in the questionnaire. And this was where his role ended. It meant that on the old Prussian part of Upper Silesia, and this number is quite shocking, but at the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944, almost 90% of the population was made a Volksdeutscher.

Wiktor Piekorz, a former Wehrmacht soldier: I was called up. I was a Pole, so how was I supposed to go to the army. There was no getting out of it. I was going to join the German army, that is the Wehrmacht, or else I would have been regarded as a deserter.

Józef Kłyk, an amateur film-maker from Bojszów: Generally speaking it was a sensation that, when my grandfather drank with Poles he was Polish, whereas when he drank with Germans he was at the time enrolled in the Volksbund. My mother got a so-called Mutterkreutz, when in 1937 her two sons were in the Polish army, and later got a medal from Hitler (which I still have) for having sons for Hitler. When in 1939 the Germans invaded Poland, the eldest, Alojzy, was hit by a bullet in the head and was killed... one of these sons. He died as a Polish soldier, a Podhale soldier, near Rybnik. Since the border was there and he was one of the first to die. It was September 1, 1939.. On September 2, 1939 they were already in Pszczyna. In Pszczyna Hanzlig, the youngest, was a fireman fighting to extinguish fires on the Siedlice farm, and because he was in the uniform of a fireman he was sprayed by machine fire. And so the other son was dead. And the other two were taken into the Wehrmacht.

Wilhelm Broncel, a former Wehrmacht soldier: We did not understand all that was said in German, since we could not speak it so well. But you had to swear loyalty.

Prof. Ryszard Kaczmarek, The University of Silesia: this document which I have in front of me talks about the situation in 1944, instructing the Wehrmacht commanders that when they came by

persons from Upper Silesia with a poor knowledge of German, they were to remind them that it was their duty to ensure that the new recruits learned German quickly. In short, it represents the policy of Germanisation of Upper Silesia - . Eindeutschung. Because in the Wehrmacht there were people with German citizenship who could not speak German, even though they were fighting for the German Reich.

Franciszek Czarnynoga a former Wehrmacht soldier: An officer entered and this Silesian stood to attention. And this German says to him " Sagen Sie was". Which is, Say something in German. And we started to laugh, but then he knew there was something more. And then he ordered all of us out into the corridor, shouting, "Aufstehen! Marsch! Marsch!"

The Mini-dictionary of a Recruit

We eventually learned all the formulae, like reporting for duty. At the beginning it was a big problem with none of us knowing German.

Alojzy Lysko: Auschwitz-Birkenau. From there to Bojszów it is only 3 kilometres. We all knew what was happening there, but nobody could do much to help. Everyone was frightened. When the transport came you could hear the screams of the SS-men, the baying of dogs, the crying of children, the playing of music. It was all a mix of sounds.

Helena Uszok: By the stink of the bone you knew what they were burning. God only knows what those people must have suffered.

Alojzy Lysko: the SS-men rushed through Bojszów on motors in search of fugitives. People were afraid, nobody had the courage to look them in the eye. Children wet themselves out of fear. In May 1942 news came that my aunt's brother had been murdered in Dachau . There was great sadness in the house. Their three sons were in the Wehrmacht. But then somebody came to the aunt and said the following, "There is a young boy in your rye field. He has escaped from Auschwitz. And maybe

he should be rescued. And my aunt did not hesitate long, but she said, "They killed one young life and I will rescue the second."

Monument funded by the saved August Kowalczyk

August Kowalczyk was hidden in my family for a few weeks, and he was saved.

Nobody expected that when the last prisoners left Auschwitz and Birkenhau that people would continue to suffer in those camps. From April to September 1945 former Wermacht prisoners were imprisoned there. It is thought that there could have been as many as 20-30 thousand.

During the war Silesians escaped to work in the mines in order to avoid being called up to the Wehrmacht. It didn't help much, because later in the final phase of the war they all had to go to the front. Russian prisoners of war took their place. And after the war, the prisoners of war from the Wehrmacht were sent to work in the mines where they had once worked.

Łucja Lysko, the wife of Alojzy Lysko: My father's brother was called up at 19 years of age. My father accompanied him to the train to Bieruń. Still with these thoughts he spoke to father, "No, I will escape". And at that moment a train approached with prisoners destined for Auschwitz and looking at them he said, "You know, brother, I cannot do that to you all. You would suffer the same fate as these people, they would kill our entire family."

Teofil Biolik a former Wehrmacht soldier: Somebody informed the Germans that somebody was hiding here. It was early morning and we were all still at home. Suddenly there was a pounding at the door – "Aufmachen" - to open. Mother didn't know what to do. We had to hide him. And they hid him in the pigsty. These Gestapo officers had black gloves on. They had whips also. They came up to my mother and hit her on the face. and they hit her in the face and they asked if there was a stranger in the house. And the mother categorically denied any such thing. It's hard to believe it, but with two pigs putting their paws up on the sty fence and the dog barking so loudly they became

disoriented, and in the end they never found him. They even apologised.

Alojzy Lysko: and then what happened?

Teofil Biolik, a former Wehrmacht soldier: It was 1943. In 1944 I was 17 years old and was called up to the Wehrmacht. I had to report to Rybnik and from there to the unit Horb am Neckar.

Marta Krzemień: Paweł was at the front. He fought. And later, I don't know how many years he was there at the front. He came back on leave, and he didn't want to go back. And he didn't. Because his brother refused, why should he go and fight. They would kill him and that the end of this war was near, right?

Prof. Ryszard Kaczmarek, the University of Silesia: If they decided to escape, they usually did it on their return from home on leave. They got back on the return train, confirming their departure. But on the way to the front that person would disappear. That often meant that the person returned to their hometown and was either hidden by his family, or his in the forest in so-called bunkers, and you'll find quite a lot of those in this area.

Marta Krzemień: When Paweł escaped from the Wehrmacht, they took their vengeance. There were frequent inspections. The Gestapo would come and dig up everything. We had inspections all the time. The Gestapo would arrive. They dug everything up, and they would throw all the straw in the attic out in the yard. We barely survived. And for me, I remember how when I was 13 or 14 years old, a military policeman grabbed me, Werner was his name. He put a gun to my head wanting me to say where my brother was hidden. I knew where he was as we would visit him at night. But my mum had always told me that if I told them they would kill all of us, even the babies. I was so afraid, but I said nothing.

Alojzy Lysko: Father made a choice. Auschwitz was too close. He was worried about the fate of his family. He went to the front.

Volksbund headquarters, Kassel - Germany

Alojzy Lysko: During the war in the ranks of the Wehrmacht there were around 400 men from Bojszów, When one looked through the records, the name Lysko was the most frequent, and five of these were killed.

Fritz Kirchmeier: Your father was killed in the small village of Jamki, it is nearby Kirowograd. This village no longer exists. According to our information as many as 25 Wehrmacht soldiers were killed in Jamki. The majority of them were killed in January of 1944. Among them was your father, Lysko Alois.

Alojzy Lysko: You talked about the report, on the basis of which my father appears, but there was this story circulating in my family, that during the crossing of the Dnieper, my father threw down his weapon and his commander, captain Petersen had him sent to a penal company, and no one ever saw him again. Could that captain Petersen have submitted this report?

Fritz Kirchmeier: We don't know how he died. It is somewhat strange that all 25 men were killed in January. We must skim through our computer files. We will enter his surname and see what our records say.

Alojzy Lysko: They were going to Moscow. September, 1941. And when the news came that he had fallen there, there was great grief. We held a funeral and so on.

And can I have printout about Paweł, my uncle. He was my father's brother. Will there be a printout?

Lucia Lysko, wife of Alojzy Lysko: My uncle died in the Italian mountains in 1943. And he is buried in the cemetery on Monte Cassino. The last letter is dated to the beginning of November, in which he wrote, "It is unbearable, mother. I will not return from this war. The Americans are pounding us

day and night. The mountains are on fire. There is nowhere to hide. Blood is everywhere and we are all splattered with gallons of blood”.

Alojzy Lysko: My wife's uncle was buried in a German cemetery even though he was Polish. There in the Polish cemetery lies my uncle. Perhaps they fought one another, even though they did not want to do so.

Prof. Ryszard Kaczmarek, the University of Silesia: 220 thousand conscripted from the Katowice Rejency, from the once Polish lands, to the German army, which in my opinion indicates that that figure rose in 1944 to somewhere between 250 and 300 thousand Polish soldiers **enlisted to** the Wehrmacht.

Alojzy Lysko: My uncle, Józef Lysko, conscripted to the Wehrmacht, took part in the battle of Monte Cassino. He managed to join the other side of the front, and under a changed surname fought as a Polish soldier and died as a Polish soldier.

ROME

The Polish Emigration Pastoral Delegation

Alojzy Lysko: I have always wondered how my father felt in his soul. I think that the same act must have taken place in the heart of a young and future priest, like yourself.

Archbishop Szczepan Wesoły, a former Wehrmacht soldier: The regiment which I was in was a lookout post in southern France by the sea. Actually, we always spoke Polish. There nobody spoke German amongst themselves. One of us was from Zaolzie, another was from Kashubia. There was also someone from Pomerania. I was from Silesia. Actually all the time we spoke in Polish. So indeed it was hurtful for us that people saw us as occupiers, and that we were one in the same as the Nazis.

News from the western front. On the battle fields our enemies take many casualties. They thought that when they reached the Reich borders that Germany would surrender. Nothing could be further from the truth. German reserves are marching to the front.

Archbishop Szczepan Wesoły, a former Wehrmacht soldier. But we survived. Everyone only thought about escaping. It was the only question.

Teofil Biolik, a former Wehrmacht soldier: this explosion, it is iron, it simply blew me upwards and threw me without crippling me. I hit a tree with my head, and after that I know nothing. I came around, but the sun was shining from the other side. It was already morning time. A fallen tree beside me had crushed a soldier. He was without his chest. And his hands were on my legs, which means that he wanted to pull himself out, but a few seconds later he was dead. He didn't have a weapon, everything was scattered around. I didn't know generally speaking what had happened, but it was always death for anyone to be found unarmed at the front. I saw two guys coming from this village and approaching me. They had P on the shoulders as Poles. I am saying "What boys, where are you going?, don't be afraid because I'm in this uniform but I'm Polish". I asked them whether the Germans had gone, and they said that the Americans were in the village. And I was taken prisoner. There were so many prisoners. For me it was all about food, for I hadn't eaten for four days. But how do you get food. Well whether with broken legs or ribs, you'd be surprised what a hungry man is capable of. A car approached and a Polish officer stepped out and asked who wanted to join Anders' army. Silence. You'd say yes, and they'd squash you in the night. Sure among the Germans you didn't know what to expect. Sure who were we to the Germans?

Franciszek Czarnynoga, a former Wehrmacht soldier: In this camp we were probably some 10 days. Because we were numbers, the later someone came the longer they remained. Everyone took a number in order. A train arrived. They packed us into medical vehicles, ten of us to each one. There they transported us to a barrack house which was incredibly long. They took off our slave's clothes, and we walked through a bath, through delousing, and in the next room our new uniforms were waiting for us. And so from having been stripped and deloused we came out the other side as the Polish army.

Szczepan Wesoły, a former Wehrmacht soldier: When the second Corps went into action in Italy, the English said to the General: "But you don't have reserves." Because there were no reserves of any kind! And Anders said that reinforcements would come from the front. Most of the soldiers who were in the new brigades had come from the ranks of the German army. Only on this basis could the corps have been reinforced.

Juszki – the Ukraine

Alojzy Lysko: My soul, as if divided, one part remained in Bojszów and the other wandered the endless Ukrainian plains. For we truly did not know where Jamki was.

Alojzy Lysko: Letter: "Rusland, September 13, 1942. Beloved brother, half a year has passed since we saw each other last. You know how my heart aches and how sad I feel. I make nothing of their talk. And they pretend they do not understand me. Just let them say what they want against me. Let them condemn me. I did not ask to be in this army. I must finish. Queen of Peace, pray for us, poor soldiers."

Alojzy Lysko: Those who survived the war always said that the Ukrainians are friendly, open people. They paint their houses green or blue. They are diligent, and kind in nature.

Grandmother: I was in my twenties during the war. It was an accursed war. We stayed in holes and hid in the earth. Bombs fell. Bullets flew.

Alojzy Lysko: In the bunkers all the soldiers drank for courage. And the Russian snipers could read the labels on the bottles. When night fell they would often conduct alcohol raids.

Wilhelm Broncel, a former Wehrmacht soldier: Towards the evening it fell quiet. No shots were fired. The Russians were there and we were here. Trenches and all of it. Only Russian observational planes flew overhead. We sensed it. It was four in the morning, so still. Suddenly a thunderclap.

And it was like the end of the world.

And following this, the Russians advanced. And an officer came and shouted, "Raus! Alle raus, die Rusen sind schon hier!" And we heard the shouts of the Russians. And when they were almost in our trenches „Handgranaten fertig machen." On his order all the grenades were to be thrown. I jumped forward and I looked this man in the eye. But he did not surrender, he grabbed a rifle with its bayonet, and he would have pierced me but I was first. I will say it as it was. I shot him. I had to, otherwise who knows what death I would have met.

Archbishop Szczepan Wesoły a former Wehrmacht soldier: When you are at the front, you either shoot or they shoot you. You have no choice. If you don't defend yourself, they will kill you.

Alojzy Lysko: Mistletoe. A front colleague of father told us that for the last Christmas in the hiding hole they had mistletoe instead of a Christmas tree. They cried and longed for home.

Mykoła Kostomarow: In 1944 I was very young, and a German tank stood near our house and we young boys slid playfully up to the tank, and the officer climbed out and called a guard, and he pulled us aside and wanted to kill us. My mother ran up and grabbed him by the legs. And he didn't shoot me.

Alojzy Lysko: My father died here, as a German soldier. I am looking for his resting place.

Mykoła Kostomarow: Ah, I understand. I remember the war, though I was small.

Alojzy Lysko: And was your father in the war?

Mykoła Kostomarow: My father was in the war. He was killed in 1943.

Alojzy Lysko: And where?

Mykoła Kostomarow: Somewhere near Warsaw or thereabouts. The place where your father may

have died is probably Bukryn or Bukryński stronghold. There was a great battle there, where many German and Russian soldiers were killed. That's probably your father's grave.

Alojzy Lysko: 3 of October 1943 somewhere over the Dnieper my father wrote his last letter.

Augustyn Stolarski, a former Wehrmacht soldier: We were to prevent them from crossing over the damaged railway. And they reported to us. If something moved on the bridge, we were to blow it up. And we sat at a distance of 900 m. If you saw the enemy in the optical sights you could count the hairs on his moustache. You pulled the trigger and that was that.

Alojzy Lysko: LETTER – My beloved wife, and my Alojzy. Greetings and blessings. Let Jesus Christ be praised. I give you news, my wife, that I'm still alive, but it is a warrior life. If you saw me you'd be shocked and hardly recognize me. I'm like a muddy toad from all this bog here. And I can't wash or shave. But I still have God to thank, for Jesus also suffered for our sins.

Alojzy Lysko: Pressed by Soviet tanks, my dad and his friend wanted to cross by rubber dinghies to the other side of the river. But they noticed that Soviet bombers were sinking every rubber dinghy. So them being peasant sons, they decided to cross on horses, they clutched tails, manes and miraculously crossed to the other side. My father was surrounded. From the north-east armies of Zhukov were attacking, from the south-east the army of Koniew. Soon these two armies will come to blows at Korsun'. Several thousands of soldiers die, 18 thousand are captured.

Wilhelm Broncel a former Wehrmacht soldier: And they were already about 10 metres from us, we would see them in trenches, these trenches were so deep, you could see only helmets. They looked like partridges in the field. And there before me I could see three Russians. I still had two grenades. And the first one stood up, as sturdy as an oak, I could blast him. "Halt!" He lifted his hands with difficulty and said, And who are you?" "I'm a Pole." "And you are a Pole." "And how many of you are there?" "I'm on my own, you see, just me." "Come out." So we looked each other in the eye. And so he was looking at me, and he didn't know what to do. Goodness is paid back in kind. He could've shot me dead! But, "You did good." He patted me and said, Come and sit down." So we sat down,

and the other two came along. And so we sat, the four of us, talking. "Have a smoke." And he gave me a smoke with such cordiality. And he said, "You did good".

Alojzy Lysko: For a long time I harboured the hope that my father may have been taken prisoner of war and was working in the mines up there in Siberia, as the Silesians had mainly been sent to the mines. And so he'd be both lucky and strong enough to survive and return to us.

Augustyn Stolarski, former Wehrmacht soldier: We were guarded by 12 soldiers four to the front and back and four along the side of us. We were the last, and we began to talk on friendly terms with a Ukrainian. "Where are we going and what's going to happen to us." You'll be going to work. And I look to the rises left and right of us, and there machine guns had been mounted. Boys, I think we've made our last trip. Well a line of 150 people is fairly long, and guys started to slip off here and there, between wagons. And a rebellion broke out at the place where we were meant to be shot. And those guards from behind ran ahead to help. They started shooting everywhere, and luckily it was the first of May and they were lots of banners. And when we made a run for it they didn't know what to do. But when we escaped we were in uniform. We took some of the clothes of those who'd been killed, and changed into civilian clothes. When we had run say 500 meters, we heard the report of machine-gun fire.

Alojzy Lysko: The circumstances in which my father died has always bothered me. The commander of their company, a certain Petersen, was a German from under the Danish border. He hated Silesians. He issued the order to fire at the last moment, when it was already sure that they wouldn't be able to save themselves. Meanwhile he, had prepared, as always, an escape route, and under his uniform he wore civilian clothes. This was confirmed by a colleague who fought at the front, Józef Sosna from Miedzna. He said, "We often wanted to shoot him dead, for many people had died unnecessarily from his orders." Sosna said that they had fought their last futile battle on the bare steppes of Ukraine. it was impossible to hide there, and the Russians didn't even shoot at them, during this attack they just ran them over with tanks.

Here my father died. A Soviet tank ran over his legs. A friend saw this and tried to save him, but he was cut off by machine-gun fire. How long he lay dying I do not know. But here is where he ended

his life.

Natalia Biesek sings: And a soldier ended his life, sowing the eternal sleep, and by him his brother spilled bitter tears, and by him his brother spilled bitter tears.

Helena Uszok, wife of a former Wehrmacht soldier: In July my letters came back „zurück - Gefallen fur Gross Deutschland”, and then in November they sent me a sack which he had kept in the bunker – spoons, brushes. It was November the first, and I had just come back from church, because it was All Souls' Day. This delivery was all that was left of my Robert Uszok. Great were the tears of his mother and everyone.

Franciszka Sklorz, a citizen of Bojszów: Here in the church he held funerals with empty coffins. There was no trace of the soldier, and so the empty coffins were lowered.

Krupskie – Ukraine

Ukrainian woman: The tanks were over there in Poworuky. On January the eighth they came.

Alojzy Lysko: The eighth?

Ukrainian woman: Yes, on the eighth. The burnt everything and closed in from both sides.

Alojzy Lysko: They closed in from that side and that side?

Village Council in Krupsk – the Ukraine

Council worker in Krupsk: He is not at home. Tanieczka, do you have Schmidt's address? He's come from Germany and he wants to know who is looking after the cemetery? I see. That's all. Thanks.

Alojzy Lysko: She doesn't know??

Council worker in Krupsk: I don't. Listen, you have to go.....

The German Cemetery in Krupsk, the Ukraine.

Alojzy Lysko: These are bones...

Schmidt: Yes. In the county of Kirowogradzki was a hospital. And the dead soldiers of the Wehrmacht were buried there. Last year their remains were brought here.

Alojzy Lysko: Are their surnames known?

Schmidt: Yes, they are.

Alojzy Lysko: Here! Here! My father is here! Here he is!