Round-Up Of Jews In Cracow

I took this photograph at the begining of the 1940s in Cracow. One can see the round-up of Jews in the Podgorski Market in this photo.

My childhood flair for photography was still there. I had my own photo camera - a Leica with a claw and a fixed focus lens. I'd always carry the camera around with me. I'd take pictures from the tram. One day I managed to take several pictures of a street round up of Jews in Podgorze. I took them from inside a coffin - through a knothole. This coffin was set up in the window of a funeral parlor, which was owned by my friend Staszek Gawlik, a Pole.

One night, in October 1942, I ran away from the ghetto. On my own I discovered an underground passage, running through houses which were connected to the ghetto. Nobody knew about this passage but me. Before the war I had had a girlfriend, a Pole; her name was Jadwiga Lepka and she worked in a bookstore. I ran away to her. I had to get Aryan papers. A priest agreed to give me a fake certificate of baptism, issued for Jozef Seweryn. Seweryn was the last name of my mother's husband - the Catholic, the Pole. All his children were Seweryns and I became a Seweryn as well. I looked right, and I was taken for an Aryan. By the end of 1942 I married Jadwiga. I started working in the same bookstore where she worked. I had a section there - I repaired fountain pens, I had to make a living somehow.

I went back to the ghetto several times, I was active in the PPS, and we tried to help Jews. In November 1942 I was arrested, on the street, and not in a street round up. I met two Jews on Krakowska Street, in the Arkady cafe. When I left the cafe, I was caught by the Gestapo. First they sentenced me to death, and then they sent me to Auschwitz as Jozef Seweryn. Well, and I was Polish, an Aryan and so it stayed in the papers. Even in a book, published recently, listing the transports to Auschwitz, my nationality is listed as Polish. It was only several years ago that I went to Auschwitz and told them that I was a Jew.