

## Postscript

---

About two weeks later one of my Polish Radio colleagues, the violinist Zygmunt Lednicki, who had taken part in the rebellion, came back to Warsaw after his wanderings. Like many others he had come on foot, wishing to be back in his own city as soon as possible. He had passed a temporary camp for German prisoners of war on the way. When he told me about it later my colleague added immediately that he did not approve of his own behaviour, but he had simply been unable to restrain himself. He went up to the tangle of barbed wire and said to the Germans, 'You always claimed to be a cultured people, but you took everything I had from me, a musician – my violin!' Then an officer rose with difficulty from the place where he was lying and staggered over to the wire. He looked wretched and shabby, with stubble on his face. Fixing despairing eyes on Lednicki, he asked, 'Do you happen to know a Mr Szpilman?'

'Yes, of course I do.'

'I'm a German,' the man whispered feverishly, 'and I helped Szpilman when he was hiding in the attic of the fortress commando unit in Warsaw. Tell him I'm here. Ask him to get me out. I beg you—'

At that moment one of the guards came up. 'You're not allowed to talk to the prisoners. Please go away.'

Lednicki went away. But next moment it struck him that he did not know the German's name. So he turned back, but

the guard had now led the officer away from the fence.

'What's your name?' he called.

The German turned and shouted something, but Lednicki could not make it out.

And I did not know the officer's name myself. I had intentionally preferred to remain in ignorance of it, so that if I were captured and interrogated, and the German police asked who had been supplying me with bread from the army stores, I could not give his name away under torture.

I did everything in my power to track down the German prisoner, but I never managed to find him. The POW camp had been moved, and its whereabouts was a military secret. But perhaps that German – the *one human being* wearing German uniform that I met – perhaps he got safely home again.

I sometimes give recitals in the building at number 8 Narbutt Street in Warsaw where I carried bricks and lime – where the Jewish brigade worked: the men who were shot once the flats for German officers were finished. The officers did not enjoy their fine new homes for long. The building still stands, and there is a school in it now. I play to Polish children who do not know how much human suffering and mortal fear once passed through their sunny schoolrooms.

I pray they may never learn what such fear and suffering are.