

NATIONAL

# Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH  
COMMUNITY**

**SHMUEL REIFER**

Interviewed by David Gould

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F470 Side A

Would you just like to tell me your name, and if that has always been your name?

Always been my name. Shmuel Reifer.

And what date were you born?

15th of November 1920. And the Jewish date is the second day of Hrisham two wisepie(ph)

And where were you born?

The town I was born was called Chrzanow. This is between Cracow and Katowice. Halfway. Cracow is - is - Galicia. Katowice was Silasia(ph) And this was a German town before 1918. And when Poland was created in 1918, it was a part of Poland. But it was still Silasia(ph) This is between - between Cracow and Katowice. It was not far in fact from a place called Matchkie. Which was a village. And my father used to tell me always when we passed by, when we had gone by train to Sostoviok(ph) or Mistovitz(ph), he showed me that Matchkie is three cornered. And he said before the First World War if you look to the left it was Germany. If it you look straight it was Russia. To look to the right it was Austria. Hungarian Austrian kingdom. Empire or whatever you call it. And therefore it was a very junction town - in culture, in business and in - in history. The town is maybe old. Two hundred years. According to the gravestones there. There was a Rabbi. The first Rabbi. Two hundred years ago. And my family goes back - some times back to this time. As a matter of fact that my son I send him two or three years ago to Poland. I want him to see from where he comes. And he was on the - you know - the cemetery. He managed to get through, because it was Sunday, he couldn't get in only if he had to go over the fence. And he found my great grandfather's gravestone.

What was his name?

His name was Elookhim Ghetzel Reifer. And he was a big farmer before - I didn't know him of course. And he was a very - known person there. And he came back and he told me he has seen the date of his Yootsat(ph) Which was highear(ph), the same day that Israel has got their independence day. But the year he didn't remember any more. But Chrzanow was a very orthodox town. It was a town which had 35,000 inhabitants. And of this 35,000 was 12,000 Jewish people. And in the centre of the town was all Jewish people. And Saturday Shabbath there was no - all the shops were Jewish. There was no shop open on Saturday. So orthodox was it in my time. Before the First World War it was even more. And I remember, there was, you know, on the marketplace there is a motorway between Katowice and Cracow, as I mentioned before. Which goes through the marketplace, the main centre, like square. In this square there was a petrol station which was belonging to orthodox Jews called Raktmilshif(ph) And this was the only petrol station in the town. And it was a small town. And this station was closed on Saturday Shabbath. So the manager was a man called Motroposen(ph) And he was also an orthodox Jew. And Friday before Shabbath for half an hour he closes it. But what was the outcome? The cars who got

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stuck without petrol had to wait til Shabbath was out. This is a fact. Unbelievable. Can you believe this.

The trade in the town was normally influenced by the Jewish community?

All Jewish. This town Chrzanow, this was a district town. And which is called in Polish destroska(ph) This was from the government.

It was an administrative centre of the area?

Yes. You see this county had 87 villages around, belonging to this. And even a few towns. One like Shabeen? There was a railway junction. And the other one was Yavoshina (ph) Yavoshina(ph) was a town - a mining - a coalmining town. In Cheshowice there was a market - a very big market town. In Auschwitz - which is called Oswiecim - was about 15 miles. Not even maybe, maybe 13 miles from Chrzanow. We were very near to the death camp where so many Jews have been gassed. And the fact is, we did know that there is something. But we didn't know the extent. Even if we were so near. Then the Germans came in. They have - annexed it. Chrzanow. They have elected to the German Reich.

This was in 1939?

'39. And they have changed the name to Kranau. So that Oswiecim they called Auschwitz. Oswiecim was a smaller town than Chrzanow. It was also very orthodox. Very nice orthodox town.

Let's go back to the 20's now. You say there was a lot of business. What kind, was it agricultural?

The people in the town - the people were business people mostly.

What were the big trades?

A lot of people used to go to Germany. Because Biten(ph) was not far. It was very near to the German border. And they used to go - Sunday they used to go there and come back Friday. A lot of them made a living from - they used to go - to the German houses and sell them materials and things like that. They used to go over there. They used to have better business or more established. You see the Germans were more cultivated people. And more business people. And you could make a living easier from them than you could make from - The Polish people were poor and - not poor in - in money. Poor in education. And poor in every respect. The Germans were more cultivated. If this cultivation has brought to any results. This you know the results - They could be good and they could be devils like they were. Like we all know what they were. But the fact is that it was easier to make a living by the Germans. Because they were richer and more organised and more educated and more industrialised than the Polish. The Polish people were backward people.

So there were very strong trade links between your area and ...?

Yes. There was a lot - in Chrzanow there was a lot of manufacturing also. Like trikotarsh(ph) You know what trikotarsh(ph) is.

Knitwear?

Knitwear. And there was - For instance, my father was - we were in the timber trade. He had a sawmill. My grandfather. As my great grandfather was a big farmer, he had a lot - this used to be called not a farmer, but it was - he had a few hundred acres, maybe a thousand acres, of land. And he had also - he was adjoining to this - You know in the old days in Poland, this was a graftshafta(ph) There were areas which belonged to the Prism. To the .....(German?) You know in Poland, a hundred, two hundred years ago, Poland was a country. But it used to be in areas which the owner, he was the ruler. He used to have a lot of - you know - where the trees are growing. Where the timber grows. The forests. Used to have the forests. And they used to have also the farms. They used to have a castle there. And they were the rulers, they could do what they want. And they had an area. Because my grandfather had such a thing in a smaller way than these Polish things. So he was adjoining. He was a neighbour from this great pretsim(ph). They used to call ...(spoken in German?) And they used to have the old titles even. Even before the war. So one of them was called Sapieha. He was one of the - he still had adjoining to Sanof(ph) - big grounds and forests in Bobrik. This was between Chrzanow and Oswiecim. And because my grandfather used to also be. So he had the connection. And he used to buy from them the forests every year.

So he was broking. In other words he took the .....?

It goes like this. You know if they had, say, 50,000, 100,000 acres of forests. So the government used to control this forest as far as you can cut off. You know to grow a forest takes 20 or 30 or 50 years. So what they did, you know, every big forest had a plan, say, of 50 years. And it was allowed every year to cut off so much and so much trees. Because otherwise one year they will cut off all the trees and there will be too much trees and they wont have anything and it will go rotten. And the other year there wont be any timber. So this was every year the same. So every year they had permission to, say, 20 acres of timber off the trees to cut down. So every year, as my grandfather had this connection, he used to have from this adjoining neighbour, the big Prism as they used to call it. There was one Pototsky, no name. One of them was a gelsadik(ph) you know. He has at Cheshowicz a big -

Now these words you just said, they are titles?

They are names of old - very old - of the Prism. They had all the powers. They could even kill him. They used to come every - used to have a moshek(ph). And a moshek had to comply with everything. And they used to have these restaurants - not called restaurants - They used to give the licence. The licence. And they had to pay so much and so much to the porets(ph). And if they didn't pay, the porets(ph) can not only throw him out, like today you take a bailiff, he could kill him or anything. And the moshek(ph) had to come to myusiv(ph), you know, every astis(ph) come to the poris(ph) and do everything what he wants because he was so frightened for him. If he didn't have to pay - the horenda(ph), as we used to call in the old days. In my time

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they didn't have anymore this power. But they still came from this - from these old, old, old families. It was in a smaller way. And they used to have big - they used to have big areas which belonged to them. They had a castle in it. And their income - they didn't work in the fields. The fields they used to rent out. But their main income was either from the rivers, from the fish. Or it was from the timber. Because every year they had so much and so much timber. And this timber - my great grandfather was always a person who used to buy from them. Usually the time to cut this timbers is in winter. And some of them they are not allowed to cut it. So in winter, every year, my great grandfather, so my father, used to go to this Prism, to this person, or the Graften they used to be called. And made a contract with them how much ever it will be in this area. He buys up so much and so much for so much and so much. And this was always you made a contract with them. And this was regular every year.

And this was really a family business on both sides?

My grandfather had three liksis(ph). Which one was in Bobrik. Sapieha. The old name. Sapieha's uncle was archbishop of Cracow. And he was also from the same family. He was very much respecting my grandfather more and my great grandfather more.

Your grandfather's name was?

Reifer. Lukengraf(ph) Reifer. And his grounds were in Crochover(ph) and Shibata(ph). These villages used to belong to him. But they were in comparison to this were little. But still as a neighbour - he had this connection with these people. And he used to buy up from them these forests every year. The main supplier was Sapieha. And then was Pototsky.

Where was Pototsky?

In Cheshowitz. All in this neighbourhood. Then in Koczkiwicz in Stashefski, also one. And this was the basis. And my great grandfather was a timber merchant. So the next step was to produce from this timber. In winter they are cut. It is taken out from the forests. And they are brought to a railway station. And they are sorted out, these timbers. Because timber is, say, 20 metres long. So the first 4 or 6 metres are the best ones for furniture. The others are for another purpose. And the top is thinner. You know, they get thinner and thinner. And this is for different purposes. And this is a business, you know. He cut it down with his workers. But you have to pull it out from there. It was not like here, you've got these nice ways. So usually in winter when the snow and everything is frozen, you put it on a sleigh with horses. It is easier to pull with chains. And you bring it out to the station. Which could have been 20 miles, 30 miles, 10 miles. And you know from a high hill they used to bring it down. And then consequently of this, my father and grandfather had built sawmill. You know, to develop this and to cut it into - you know - in Chelmek he had this sawmill, my grandfather.

And how many people worked in the sawmill?

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About 20 people. But this is in a sawmill alone. But in winter when they used to take out these timbers to the station, to the railway station, next to the railway station, where it was sorted out and cut up. A part has gone to the sawmill, a part has gone to the collieries. Because the collieries in Silesia - there is a lot of - coal collieries, you know, for - the industry. Where, you know, where you dig the coal you have to put in the props. In the top part this is props. Because you don't need so thick - they don't need to be straight. You know, the worst part is for the props. And then the best part you cut and make for floors and for - you know - for every type of things. It depends what it is - to what you can use it the best. And this was my father's and grandfather's business. And they have developed a very nice business. And my grandfather was a very religious person. He used to get up every day 3 o'clock in the morning. And he used to go to the Mikveh. I remember that.

He used to go?

Yes, my grandfather.

Why did he used to go. Because the Mikveh is for women?

No, it is for men also. A Mikveh for women, it is only after the period. But for men they go there before the duvernings(ph) they go to the Mikveh every day. Even here they do that. So I remember every winter he used to have - you see this sawmill was in Chelmek. My father used to go every day, 5 o'clock in the morning, to the station. And he took the train, which was two stops to Liblianach. There was a coalmine where we sold these props. And the next stop was Chelmek, where it was a sawmill.

Tell me about your grandfather?

We come back. And my grandfather - had in Chrzanow. This was because Chelmek was near to these forests. The main supplier of the timbers. Therefore he built it in Chelmek. This sawmill. And also in Chrzanow my grandfather - had a warehouse, or whatever you call it, where he sold timber. Round timber and prepared timber. All type of things. This came from Kochtilesk and other places. And from this which he didn't need in Chelmek, came and took some to his warehouse or place where he sold it, was retail and wholesale. No - to carry on this, my grandfather used to get up at 3 o'clock in the morning. And every winter he took to himself one of the grandchildren. In order to teach him how a Jewish man has got to behave himself. He used to go and get up at 3 o'clock and he used to wake me up at the same time when I was about 5 years or 4 years. And he used to give me, I remember, wine or - milk and cake. Until he came back from the Mikveh. And he used to have his own Beth Hamidrash. And it was winter and very cold and he made a fire. Built next to this timberyard. He used to have built a special Beth Hamidrash for himself. And then he came back. He started to say tehillin. You know, tehillin. He said every day, in the morning, the whole tehillin.

And laid tehillin?

No, it was too early to lay tehillin. Without tehillin. And at 4.30, a quarter to five, he was finished with the tehillin. And this winter when I was with him, where he wanted

to teach me. I had to say with him. I couldn't - keep up with him. So he said to me "look, you are already four and a half years", or whatever I was, "you can't daven yet". So it's not a joke, but I remember that quite clear. And afterwards he had friends who came and we started to learn the Talmud about 5 o'clock. Til 7.30.

In his ...?

In his Beth Hamidrash. And he used to learn Talmud til 7.30. 7.30 you put on the ....? and ....? They used to daven til 9 o'clock. And 9 o'clock he's gone home. Which his home was next door. It was a big house. Kochtileska 18. The street was called Kochtileska. 18 and 18a. And he used to have - it was two houses. In the middle was a porch where the trucks used to come in. Or the horses with the timber. And there was a big yard. And in this yard he had - on the lefthand side was a Beth Hamidrash built. Where he used to learn. And then he used to go home to his home and used to have breakfast. And he took home a few poor people to eat with him. And then he has gone to the business. In this timberyard, on the other side on the left - on the right hand side he has his office. And he used to be at the business until 3 o'clock. At 3 o'clock he had again a shiur where he learnt with his friends. I didn't know his friends. Every winter he took down another of his grandchildren to teach them and to ..

So you would actually stay with him?

For the whole winter. For one winter. And I used to go to cheder. And I loved to be with my grandfather, because I got so much attention there, and it was always busy. So many people used to come with this timber. People in the business. And then horses and so on. I used to play there. And then to the cheder.

Was it a dangerous place for the children to be playing?

Only me. And I had the full attention. Because there was a man called Jacob. Not a Jewish man. He used to look after me. I remember that still. And then I had to go to cheder. Usually when I was at home we were living - quite away. So in the morning they came to fetch me to the cheder. And they brought me in the afternoon back.

Where was the cheder?

The cheder was on the same street where my grandfather - Not opposite, a bit higher, but it was very near. So I didn't need to be picked up, I could go over to learn. I mean at this age what did you really learn, you know. So I liked better to play in my grandfather's yard, or the timberyard. To play with the children there. So I learned for half an hour, three quarters of an hour. So I had time to go out, say, 12 o'clock til 1. And afternoons from 3 til 4. And the rest I played. I loved to be at my grandfather's. I didn't want to go home. If my mother wants to see me she had to come down to see me there. This I remember quite clear.

And this would have been when?

Well, this must have been in the late 20's. '26, '27, '25.

So you would be about 9?

5 or 6 years. No, not more than that.

And what about your grandmother. What kind of a lady was she?

She was a very good lady. She was called Rachow Heigli. And she had sisters, they used to come. She was diabetic I remember. She couldn't do a lot. My grandfather had 8 children. So the youngest daughters used to run the house. And every day there were always poor people coming to eat. She had a lot of work to do. And my grandmother didn't do a lot. But she had visitors and so on. They used to come. Her sisters - she had got a sister named Hyman(ph) and Milya(ph) and Mehenshi(ph). I remember them. Yeh, I remember them. And so it was nice. She was a very good lady.

Your grandfather was obviously an important man?

Yeh, he was a very important, recognised, known man. And he was a Hassid. He used to go to the Rebbe three or four times a year, with all the family, with the children. And this was a boost for the whole thing you know.

What do you mean when you say he was a Hassid?

He was a Hassid ....? You know that. I don't know if you know much what this is. This is a separate thing to talk about. Which is not a thing to learn now, to know about it. You know, there was abowshentoff(ph) 200 years ago. And he has brought in - you know, because you see - it is the Jews are built on the ....? Which Moses brought down from the Mount Senai(ph). And then came house this developed. There came the Talmud and there came the rest and the rest and the rest and the rest. So there was a lot to learn. And a person who had trouble in life - which most people have - couldn't keep up with it. So in the community the person who didn't know to learn, had lost his importancy.

F470, END OF SIDE A

F470 Side B

The Belshemtoff(ph) said that a person who doesn't know tehillen so much, but if he can in the same way do the will for ashem(ph), from God. And he can sacrifice himself - time and everything - he can do the same in learning. And he makes these ordinary people important. As much as the people who are learning. Because not everybody can learn. You see he came from Ukraine. Ukraine. And there was a lot of pogroms and troubles. And all the history for the Jews. And not everybody - the Jews there have been very low. And he has boosted them up and tried to bring them up to a standard. And he made them important. To give them confidence and so on.

So your grandfather was a follower of the Belshemtoff(ph)?

Not direct of the Belshemtoff(ph). But descendants. You know, generations later. You see there is a lot of factions to this Hassidism. Because everybody needs a different catering. A different way. So, you know, everybody found his way - by another - of this. My great grandfather used to go a Rebbe called Tfera Shleva. I mean he is - he was in Radomsk. And he passed away in 130, 140 years ago. ....(SPOKEN IN GERMAN/YIDDISH) Which is exactly 134 years. Matter of fact that his Yahrzeit was only two days ago. And he left books. You know, he brings out his thinking, he put in his atoyla(ph). He found it in the pentantow(ph). You know, explanations and so on. And the way he was working to help the people. And this is a whole story, I mean to explain to you .. And this is only a by-product. So this was going on like this. On and on. Of course in Poland, the Polish people never liked the Jews. Why they didn't like it - you know there is a lot of talk about that. There is a lot - I mean the fact is - usually you don't like a person. Most of the hatred comes from jealousy. A lot of people are saying that they were jealous of the Jews. Because the Jews are a more capable race than the others. This maybe one of the reasons. But not always you find that they hate them because they are jealous. This could be one - The fact is that since the Jews - they were the envy of the world. And there has always been hatred. And the Mount Seina(ph) - you know, on the Mount Seina(ph) the Torah has been given. The explanation. That at that time they got the Torah they started to hate them. And this is a fact. The explanations are only part explanations. Because you see Hitler hated Jews. Unbelievable it was for him. More important to kill all the Jews than to win the war. I will tell you later facts where it was - And history says that Hitler never had any deals with Jews - direct. You see if somebody worked with Jews. Somebody didn't treat him well, or whatever it was. But it just wasn't the case. It was a born in hatred, without any explanation. Just the Jews are the - they used to say "the Jews are the tragedies of the world". The Jews are like worms. They have to be - eliminated completely.

When you were a youngster and visiting your grandfather and living at home. This was the German anti-semitism you are telling me about. Were you aware of the Polish anti-semitism?

Yes. Yes. I tell you what. The Polish - the Polish people - the Polish inhabitants or whatever you call them. They used to call you 'Zhid'. 'Zhid Ypauchro'. Which means a Jew who is - who has got - you know - ypachro is called somebody who has got a

- a - a rash. 'A Jewish Rash'. That's what they used to call you. Always been like this. They used to hate you. And not once they called us like this. And not once - I got smacked or kicked or whatever it is. But - this is what I understood - til the 30's, you know, when Peersuvski(ph) was in Poland - president. So they somehow - they had a legencia(ph). And the business people and the Jews. So it wasn't popular to do it open. But as soon as Hitler came. He has given them the boost and they start it off. In Poland it was called - the party against the Jews were Andiks called. Andiks. And they started off a revive. They started to be active against the Jews. With Hitler's - with Hitler's - Nazis. And they started off in Poland, all the Jews - they used to start it - the Jews are - have got our business, don't buy by Jews. In my time, in the 30's. In the beginning of the 30's. And all the Jewish - there was a law, you know, of each shop, you have to put on the name of the shop. So if somebody was called Reifer. S. Reifer. So you put on S. Reifer. They made a law, 'S' is no good. You had to put Shmuel Reifer. That you should recognise that it is a Jewish shop. That you should know that it is a Jew. Like the Nuremberger(ph), you know, the Nuremberger(ph) laws. Jews had to be called Israel. So they made it in Poland on the shops. And then they come every day to the market there. And on the Jewish shops they used to put pickets, yellow pickets. "Don't buy by Jews. This is a Jewish shop". And these Andiks used to stand next to the Jewish shop and put in somebody, a goy(ph), who used to go into a Jewish shop. So they used to put a picket on his back. A yellow picket. That he is a Jewish opsherats(ph). I remember, before the war. You see our sawmill was next to the station in Chelmek. And on one side was a station. The railway station. A small station, because it was a village. On the other side was our sawmill. So there was a big fence. Maybe 2,000 or 3,000 metres long. Because it was a big yard. And it was a - you know - the trains used to come in with the timbers and take away the timbers. You know, we used to send out timbers. So they put in - these Andiks put on the fence - "Here is a Jewish Sawmill. Do not buy by the Jews". Once the police came to the yard, for my father, to the sawmill, to buy some timbers. So they told him "why don't you take this out. Why don't you scrub it". You know, the train used to go through, you could see it. And my father didn't do anything, he left it. So my father said "I don't mind. If he needs me he will come in any case. If he doesn't need me he wont come". So it was written quite clear, like this.

When you were a child, would people just walk past you in the street and give you a cuff?

Yes.

And you were recognisable. Did you have Peyyos?

Yes, I had Peyyos. Oh yes. Once I was in Cracow and the Rebbe, who my grandfather used to adore and to go. He was in Cracow. I was to visit my mother's mother. It was before Rosh Hashana. So I heard that the Rebbe is there. So I went to him. And he was in a private clinic. This was near to the university. Where doctors were. So I went there. And this was an area where no Jews were living. So I went - I didn't know that there is a lot of students who are hating Jews. I didn't go on the pavement, I did go in the middle, because I didn't know if I met a student he will hit me. And they hit me first on the way. I remember that. This was maybe three or four years before the war. There was another accident. We used to go in summer for

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summer holidays in a place called Alvernia. This was in the mountains. And this was not far from Chrzanow. The railway station was called Regolicze. This was not far from where my great grandfather used to have his - his - farm, or his googeet(ph) we used to call it. Not far. So we were there. And Alvernia was a - a - for the young galluca(ph) Not the bishops, the young - the priests. There was a convent.

You mean a monastery?

A monastery. And they used to teach them there. And this was a forest where we used to go for a walk, you know, because it was a nice forest. Fresh air. So we went down into this forest for a walk, just for a nice walk. And we were a few people. And there was an elderly person called Shiff Abzeesher(ph) And from this monastery ran out a few young -

Novices?

Well, they used to go with - brown - you know, long robes. And they smacked us hard. And we ran away because we were young. And this old man they threw down on the ground and they smacked him. Then we have gone afterwards to the police station in Regolicze, where there was a station, to make a complaint. They started to laugh at us. And they used to say "paise, paise, paise"(ph). And they laughed at us.

What did that mean?

Paise(ph). They laughed at us. Thursday afternoon. Every Thursday my father used to - Sunday he used to go to the business and Thursday he used to come. And Thursday my mother used to take us to the station to fetch my father. When my father came I was a boy of 10 years or 11 years. So I ran to my father, I told him what has happened. "They smacked us, they beat us. The police station. And they laughed on us". So my father told me "don't you know that you are a Jew. And if a Jew gets one smack he should thank God that he didn't get two". "Or he gets one kick, he should be happy that he didn't get two". That I remember quite clear.

So this was the way that society was organised. In a sense that you expected to be hit and the Poles were basically anti-semitic?

Very hostile. Very anti-semitic.

Was there ever any attempt at resistance. For example, did the Jews ever fight back?

The Jews were so - they didn't have - anything in themselves to fight back. They were like my father said, "you had to be happy that if you got one smack, that you didn't get two smacks". This was a general attitude. That you must suffer. This was a general attitude. They didn't understand anything like this. Of course it started off a movement from misrari(ph) and from the boond(ph). You know, to be a - Hashara. To go to Israel, you know. But you couldn't go to Israel if you couldn't get a certificate. But there was already a movement - you know - people were very poor, very poor a lot of people. Even our area was - in comparison to others, better. But still there was a lot of very poor people.

Didn't Jewish people go to Germany because they were better tolerated in the 20's. Or before your time?

Yes, before my time, most probably yes. Because in Germany it was easier to make a living. The Germans used to say "(SPOKEN IN GERMAN)". "Live and let other people live". In Poland it was hard. It was poor. The whole population was backward. Poor.

Let's try and get back to your later childhood?

My upbringing was in the Yeshivas. I was learning. Intensive. And when the war started I was something like 18 not quite. 18.

Shall we go back first. How about your barmitzvah. Can you tell me about that?

In Poland a barmitzvah wasn't celebrated like it is here as much. I mean you become barmitzvah. You learned a year before all the things what you had to prepare yourself to it. And the family was a small - cheder. Not even everybody had done it also. They couldn't afford it. You had gone to Shule and started to put on the tefillen. And everybody drunk lehyem(ph). And they wished you and that was it.

One thing I've forgotten to ask you is how many brothers and sisters you had?

I was the oldest. My father was a second son from my grandfather. He had an older brother. Who was a partner to the business of my father. Later. Because my grandfather used to have the business. But in the 30's, when it was, you know, a big slump in the business, my grandfather lost a lot of money. He bought a lot of timbers up from this Prism what I told you before. And he couldn't sell it because the whole world was a big slump. So he lost a lot of money at the time. You couldn't sell it for anything. So my father was well enough. All the children were married already. So he has left the business altogether and left it to the children. So my father took over the whole thing. And he built it up. And then afterwards it developed again. But my grandfather was more or less retired.

Tell me about your brothers and sisters?

And I was - from my father, I was the oldest. And then I had a sister who is living in Israel now, in Armudgun(ph). And then I had another brother who has never come back. His name was Moishe. Moishe Dov. He never come back from the camps. And then I have a fourth brother who lives in America. He was a little boy. Which I tell you later. Through this brother I more or less was saved. He - he had a way with the Germans.

You went to Yeshiva. Were you sent away. Was there somewhere you stayed. Or was it local?

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Yeh, that was in my town, the Yeshiva. And I was learning from early morning till late in the night. This was my education. Mostly. I learnt a little bit in the school. A bit of Polish. And privately two hours a day.

Did you have any secular education at all?

Privately. Yes. My father has provided me with a private teacher. Every day two hours.

And what subjects did he teach you?

Mathematics. Polish. A bit of history. That's all. Because there was no Jewish school in Chrzanow. You have to go to school - you had to go to a goysha(ph) school. You were not allowed to wear aimuka(ph). And all the goyan(ph) used to say their prayer every morning. And the Jews - they kicked the Jews. It wasn't a - a pleasure to go there, put it this way.

Did you have any contact with the goyan(ph)?

I personally not much. No. Only when I came to the business my father had contact. Because he had a lot to do with - There wasn't much goysha(ph) neighbours in huge quota. Were not living a lot of goysha(ph). There was a goy(ph) called Shabuta(ph). And opposite. We didn't have much to do with him. Matter of fact after the war when I came back to Chrzanow I went there and he has seen me, and he asked me if I still - how is it I am still alive. This was a question he asked me. This was the welcome. But - there wasn't much - This Sapieha which I mentioned -

It's a very big Polish family. I've heard of them?

Yes. Listen what I tell you. This Sapieha had - had a few - you know, villages and forests. So in the 30's, in the beginning of the 30's, the shoe manufacturer from Czechoslovakia called Bata, Jan Bata, wanted to open a factory in Poland. And he was looking for a site. And this - so my father had mediated between Sapieha and Bata. That they sold them this place, which is called Chelmek, where we had the sawmill. He sold him all the forests and the whole town. It wasn't a town, it was a village. A big area. And he built this factory. And for this money he got, at that time, which was a few hundred thousand dollars. He bought some things in Belgian Congo. He has invested this money in Belgian Congo. And my father was afterwards - this was for my father a big blessing - because my father has sold - he brought from them every year the forests. Every year this much forests. And he produced - he developed it and produced it. And he sold it - he built this whole factory. There was a big factory, about 3,000 or 4,000 people. It was a blessing in the business. He was - he was - a supplier to Bata. He built the whole factory. It was a big factory and employed 3,000 or 4,000 people. And it brought in a lot of employment and wealth to this place. And they built - And he had a good connection. See because the whole thing, the outline was good. After the war - this Sapieha was in Russia. He came back. There were the Communists in Poland. So he didn't have anything. They took away everything from him. So he has gone to Congo to this investment what he has made before the war. And he had plantations of tea. He sent me once samples of tea

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here. Years ago. I don't know, I've lost the contact with him. He was very, very appreciative of me. He was very highly speaking of my father and grandfather.

So he was a friend. And he was a powerful friend to have?

Yes.

But the general population ....?

He was a friend. Put it this way, how far friend he was, I don't know. This was his business. It has suited him - you know, the situation was so that it was a benefit for him to have a Jew around him. And through this he made a lot of money through my father and has used my father too. And a lot of people, my father - you know - because this Bata factory has opened such a gate, such a world. My father put in a lot of people, Jewish people who have supplied there. They used to come every day. Only supplied for Bata. One supplied stationery, one supplied -

So it was very good for business?

Yeh. It was good. I mean no doubt about it.

How old were you when this deal went through?

I was a child. I heard about it. But I don't know -

So you must have been brought up in a fairly prosperous situation?

Yes, compared - I mean put it this way, how rich my father was in comparison to a rich man in England, I don't know. Most probably not. Nothing comparable. He had a few houses. My grandfather has built a house with four apartments. And each child who got married got an apartment in the house. He had other houses. He had still these grounds. Not intact. Grandfather had sold a lot of it. But he still had these grounds there. But - if you are going to compare it to a rich man in England, he was most probably nothing. But, say, influential, he was more because in comparison to the others, he was more respected, even with less money. Because he had more influence, because today also money talks a lot, but it didn't talk as much as it used to talk at that time. Because people were very poor.

And your grandfather certainly believed in sodoka(ph). Did he help the poor?

Yes. My grandfather was a very prominent donor in the town, to a lot of institutions and - and - You know, every Purim the door was open and people - he used to give away so much money. Once - once - this - feerst(ph) came. And he has seen there is so much people and he gives away so much money. So he asks "how is that". So my grandfather has explained to him that it's not his money, people are giving it to him to distribute it. Because, you know, they couldn't understand how this is possible.

And your father kept up this tradition?

Yes, the same tradition. As a matter of fact that my father took over this business. He was before prominent. And, you know, he was keeping up all these responsibilities in the same way.

Tell me about the house in which you were brought up. What was it like?

Not rich. We had a flat. Two rooms, kitchen, toilet, no bathroom. There was water, running water. Not only in the late 30's. You had to go out and bring the water. In about '35 they made the water and the toilets. Up to this time there was no water.

So how did you keep clean?

We have to go out. There was in every neighbourhood, there was such a well, or whatever it is, and you have to bring the water in.

That must have been rather uncomfortable in the winter?

Of course it was. I mean you didn't have central heating like I have. You had these big stoves. Coal. In the summer you had to buy coal for the winter. You had to feed the stoves. It was very cold, not like here. Still, people were more happy than they are. Because the life was more simple. Today, you see, the life is very sophisticated. And the people, everything is artificial. They talk artificial, they eat artificial, they live artificial. And they put up an artificial face. There it was more open and straight forward. And people were much more happy. Simple. There wasn't so much pretending like today. You understand what I mean.

Yes, I do?

F470, END OF SIDE B

F471 Side A

He can't keep up with it. Most people are copycats. They haven't got their own - way of thinking. Their own way of life.

So in those days things were much simpler?

Simpler.

How did you take a bath for example. Would you have to heat up the water?

You didn't have a bath at home. You had to go to the mikva.

So the mikva had the bath with the hot water?

Hot, yeh.

As well as the ritual bath?

Yeh, yeh. The mikva had the showers. And baths and everything. And you had also - a - you know - steam baths. And it wasn't - you see, the whole mikva was a whole factory, because it has to have a keslhouse(ph), you know, with coal, there's a big chimney. Old fashioned.

Was it a social centre. For the women obviously not. But for the men?

For the men - it's called bisagnases(ph). There is a bisagnases(ph) and bisamedrish(ph). If you translate the word bisagnases(ph), it means 'where you come together'. And bisamedrish(ph) is 'where you learn'. This was the most centre for the people. In the marketplace they used to come on business and to talk. Or the mikva was a big talking point.

So what was the synagogue like?

There was a lot of synagogues. A lot.

How many?

Very big ones. A thousand, fifteen hundred people to get in. There was quite a number. Small and bigger ones. Most probably 20.

Which one did you go to?

To this one which was - they had been guided by this Rebbe which I mentioned before.

Can you remind me, what was his name?

It started off 150 years ago. You know, the Barshemtoff(ph). Then after the Barshemtoff(ph) - he has had a lot of pupils, followers. There was one was the babatonya(ph). Which was where the barbage(ph) comes out. And one was .....? who made the first .....? for the magot from pulner(ph). But the main - his successor was Rebbe Rabayer(ph) from Meserich(ph). Rebbe Rabayer(ph) from Meserich(ph) had .....? .....? You know, they were the big followers. They were very poor people. They didn't - the world for them was nothing. No meaning. The next generation, Rebbe Myrik(ph) was a hoisif(ph) in Leblin(ph). In Leblin. Comes from Lansit(ph). The hoisif Leblin(ph) had 200 pupils. And one of the pupils was called Myorabda(ph). And the follower for this was a pupil from Myorabda(ph) And there it started off.

So how many people were there in your shule?

In this - shtiebel it was called. There was about 200. There was a Yeshiva. And by the way, the Rebbe was a very rich man. He didn't took any money. He kept 36 Yeshivas, which from his pocket he paid. And every town, if a comity(ph) came, reputable people said they wanted to open a Yeshiva, so he said he gives a half and the other half the people from the town should give. There was in 36 places Yeshivas. Which he was responsible and paid for.

In your town?

Not only in my town. My town was one of the 36. And I was studying in this one.

So tell me about a typical day there?

The Yeshiva - I started off by 13 years already. And you started off in the morning, 5 o'clock, 4 o'clock in the morning, learning til 8.30. 8.30 you started to daven til 10.30. 8.30 to 9.30. Then you eat and 10 o'clock, half past 10 you start to learn again. Til half past 1. And at half past 1 you had a break til 3 o'clock. And 3 o'clock til 8 o'clock in the night. And sometimes after 8 again.

So you would go to bed after 10?

Il, yeh.

So you didn't get much sleep?

No. But we were very happy. And this is where I had my education. And still I found - found myself out in the world. Because my brains were - very - encouraged from this Talmudic learning, which is very sharp you know.

Did you read a newspaper?

No, not before the war. My father used to read the Jewish Tumblatt. This was a goodist(ph) paper. A Yiddisher paper, a Jewish paper, called the Jewish Tumblatt. It was a day paper. Jewish.

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And you didn't read it?

No, I didn't.

Did you take much interest in the affairs of the world?

No. You heard. Inevitable you heard. You heard what's going on already. I remember they came in, they said in '36 "Hitler has marched on Vienna. Took Vienna. And what's happened to the Jews there". Of course we heard that. We were very concerned about this. But, you know, the world was not open for us. We were not prepared for life in the world. I wasn't prepared for life. I was brought up in a small way of life. And my outlook was very narrow. Although I could have taken a much wider look. But I was kept away from it and I didn't have the opportunity to widen out my outlook. But not everybody is like - You see this is - you know I still believe, (SCRATCHING SOUNDS)... because I have seen people who have studied and they have got degrees and they're still fools. You see people - it doesn't change their attitude. You know, what it does education, if you've got qualities it brings it out - easier. It gives it a chance more. But you can't plant in the things what you haven't got. Agree.

Yes, I do. I think you're right?

This is what I learned. I mean I wasn't prepared for life. I came to England, I couldn't speak a word English. I never gone to a school to learn English. And somehow I found my way. It wasn't easy. You can imagine. And after such a war and after losing the whole family and after not having anybody to tell you a good word. And after everything, and with the empty hands, we still build up something. And thank God I never would dream that I will have a family. And I've got grandchildren. And my son and my grandson and - My son is an accountant. And in the Yeshiva he was in ponigration(ph). He was ingasus 5 years. And my son-in-law is a solicitor. And he is a Hussid even and everything. And my daughter - I never dreamt that this will be possible.

You must have thought when you were a young man, and before the troubles started, that you would carry on your life and go and work in the sawmill. Was that your destiny?

Yes. That was my destiny.

You would inherit your father's business?

Yeh.

And carry on?

I didn't see the world. I didn't know what's going on in the world. I didn't - But I must tell you one thing. You find people who are in London, or New York, and they have got opportunities and they are still narrow minded. This has got to do with the

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way you are. Education doesn't put you in the head. If you have a head it brings it out. I said it before in other words. Do you agree with me.

I do, yes. I do. I think it is absolutely true. You were in the orthodox community?

That's right.

What about the more assimilated Jews?

There were assimilated Jews also in Chrzanow. I didn't know them much. But there were. They were in Cracow more. Cracow was a more modern town, a bigger town. Cracow was an old Jewish town which goes back 800 years. And in Cracow was a temple of the shpitelner(ph). And there was a movement for Zionism at that time. And was assimilated Jews also, you know. Usually if somebody was a doctor or a lawyer, you very seldom would find that he would be in an orthodox. But today it doesn't clash at all.

So most of the orthodox Jews were tradesmen?

Tradesmen, yes.

And any particular businesses that they specialised in?

I can't say. Everything. They all - the whole economy in Poland was in the Jewish hands. Every - every - production, business, everything the Jews had in their hands.

And do you think that contributed to the Polish anti-semitism?

As I said before, anti-semitism, a part of it is jealousy. But even if it isn't jealousy they would still hate you. It goes like this: if you are poor they look down on you, you are nothing. If you are rich - it's happening today also - on the face they respect you, but - on the side they would put in a knife in you. So whatever you do it's no good. But, you know, some people want to make themselves - they live for attention of others. And they are hungry - they have not confidence in themselves, they have got an inferiority complex. They need the recognition from others. So therefore they like to make a noise. And this noise - this gives them some good feeling. And through this - it works the other way round. But for them it's more important, they can't live without it. It's like you need air and water. They need attention. And you find a lot of people like that. And this attention - this is a power, this comes in all types of ways. You can want to be a prime minister. You can want to be archbishop. You want to be a pope. Or we want to be a rabbi. You want to be the centre of attention. And the centre of attention - in fact this is nothing. It's only because you've got an inferiority complex. You need the recognition from others. And honour from others is also the same story. It's nothing in it, it's only - a thing which makes you think this is something. But it is nothing. It's not worth the words. Because in one minute it can be so and in another minute the same person can say different. And there is very seldom people who have got an honest opinion of a thing. Mostly their opinion is formed from wishful thinking and how their interest is coming. You agree with me.

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Yes, I do, yes?

What education have you got. I mean I don't like that you agree with everything. Because in this case you learn from me, I don't learn from you anything. I would like that you attack me.

Maybe I will afterwards. But at the moment I think we must try and ....?

Don't have the impression that I am trying, you know, to influence you or I'm trying to tell you this is so. No, I was saying what I think. It's not necessarily that I'm right. I'm not always. It's not possible for a human being to be right always. It's not possible.

That is true. I mean I would love to have more of an argument and philosophical discussion with you. But for the moment we have to try and tape. When the tape recorder is off we can talk about these things more. Okay?

Yes. This is only a background till '39. Of course the last year the situation was very tense. Everybody was frightened. Everybody - has heard what's going on. But nobody could believe - nobody could believe whatever it is, that Hitler, whatever he was, that he will do what he has done. Even in later - even what I have seen. There are things which I tell you later, which I couldn't - think how I fooled myself. Because it was wishful thinking. Because - possibly it was good that I fooled myself in this way. I could easier get through things. But - you know, for this you can learn how a person is very dependent on the things which suits him to form his opinion I think. Not what it is really - You see if you want to see, I think, real how it is, you must detach yourself from it. You must be not dependent on it. And not be involved in it at all. There are very few people, very few, I haven't seen them at all, who are like this. You have usually got a wasted interest in life and you've got a wasted interest in the situation. And this makes you - this is influencing you how to think. And this way you can't see objectively I think.

It is very difficult to see something objectively when you are involved in something ...?

Well, you are involved, because you are part of life.

To carry on with your education. Were there any teachers you particularly remember. Was there any particular aspect of learning?

Oh, a lot of teachers. I want only to tell you I had a rabbi which I remember and will remember him all my life. He was a rabbi of my father also. He was called Rebbe Jankele. He was a person who had 11 children. He was very poor. He learned me from the age of 10 till maybe 15. He was learning every day. He didn't go home only from Shabbath to Shabbath. The whole week he was learning. This is before he came to the Yeshiva. And his behaviour, he didn't need anything. And his daughter used to come every morning - about half past 8, that she needs money. The wife, the mother, sent her to him. And he didn't have any. So he trusted me, he used to use me, he'd send me down to borrow money. There were two people to whom I used to go to

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borrow money for him. One was a shoemaker called Ree Sheester(ph). He was living next to the Talmudtoyer(ph). A very poor man. He was a manufacturer of shoes. And then I told you what manufacturer he was. He used to buy old shoes what you throw here to the dustbin. And he used to take them to pieces. And the leather from the top he used to put in water to soften it. And then he had pieces of timber. He used to stretch on this timber with nails. And put them in the sun to dry. And then he used to cover them up. Nothing to laugh, it is true! And he had a daughter called Golder(ph). She had a machine. And she used to sew these pieces, old pieces, to make the tops of the shoes. And then he put in the soles. He used to do it. And I used to go to him to borrow money. Once a week his production what he made for the week, he used to go to Cheshowice, which I mentioned before. This was a marketplace. And Monday, every Monday, there was a big market. They used to come from all the areas to buy. So he used to have a stall there in this marketplace. In winter it was very cold in the morning. 3 o'clock he used to go with - not with a car, because there was not many cars - he used to go with a horse. With a - you know - with a - a carriage and a horse. So he didn't have money to hire himself a car, so he shared it with either two or three. And he used to go there at 3 o'clock in the morning. Because it was very cold. And to sell his productions from the week in Cheshowice. And whenever I came to borrow from him in the morning, he never had any money. So he put together from neighbours. He always used to give me a slotta(ph). It was Polish money. Say like £1 today. He always put together, he'd take for me, for me. He used to give him, end of the month, when he used to get his salary, he used to give it back. The other Rebbe was - the other man to whom I used to go was called Yitzhak Alder Korngold. To him I used to go. He was - he was - his business was - he used to deal with currencies. You know, these people used to go to Germany. They used to bring marks and he changed, you know, a changer. He wasn't a rich man either. He used always to give me five slottis(ph). He used to give it back at the end of the month. He used to learn - his day of learning was from 6 in the morning till half past 8. From 10.30 till 1. And from 3, in winter, till 8. In summer to 7. But he had laying a clock on the table. Because he didn't sleep in the night, he used to learn. In the middle he used to sleep. So the boys used to manipulate his watch. He needn't know it. So he didn't believe. So he was frightened, he let them off five minutes earlier, ten minutes earlier. So he sent me always to go down, and there used to be a big clock, to tell him what the real time is. He trusted me. So I used to go. So one straight away said he goes to the toilet. And he ran after me - to manipulate me. But it didn't go. So. This is his way how he - Every 7 o'clock in the evening his daughter used to come and brought him something to eat. Because he wasn't eating a lot. And he was a very great man. A holy man really. And he used to say to the daughter "take it home for the children. I have enough, I don't need it". He was such a - great man really. The Germans have in 1942 they sent him to Auschwitz. I mean we know. And my brother was - you know they collected 3,000 Jews in Chrsanow to there. There was a school next to the church. They kept them 3 days there. Because, you know, in Auschwitz they used to - every 3 hours came a transport of 3,000. It didn't took longer than 3 hours to - to make for these people - you know what - burns. So - the train goes every quarter of an hour. So they kept them 3 days till the time where the booking. And they kept them - it was in May. End of May. 30th of May. It was hot already. There was no water. They put them in one room, 200 people. And people were crying out for - for water. And there was crying from the people there, who said "what's going to be". They didn't believe they are going -

they didn't know. And they came to him and asked him "Rebbe Jankele, what's going to be". So he said "if they wont let me be here, I'm going to my father". Such a great man. He was - he took it like nothing. He was such a great man. Unfortunately, he is not here. And people like this - I mean this ground here, they don't produce this type of people anymore.

No. There must have been something special in the Polish way of life and the community?

He was also not a person you can find. Such a person, for himself he didn't need anything. There is a lot to tell you. I just picked out a few things which are centre to the - to the thing.

And were you a very studious person?

Yes, I was.

Were you top of the class?

Yeh, I was always. I had ambitions to be also.

Did you want to be a Rebbe?

No. My father always said that religion is not a thing - to take from it, only to give to it. And he said once, you know, "one thing you should learn, not to be dependent on human beings. Once you are dependent then you are finished, you can't express your will and your clear mind. And you lose your identity altogether. So the first thing is not to be dependent. And the less you need for yourself you are less dependent". Basic. So I wanted always to be a businessman. But - not to live from it and not to be dependent on my religion. And not to be dependent on people.

And did you have any other interests?

I loved always books a lot. A lot of books. Hebrew books of course.

And these were holy books?

Holy books. Yeh. Which I used a lot and I had knowledge from them.

What kind of diet did you used to have. When you were at Yeshiva?

Not a lot. You used to eat breakfast. Bread and butter and - and - radishes. Eggs for breakfast. Milk. I liked always a lot of milk to drink. I was always a lover of milk. And bread and butter I liked also of course. And - and dinner time they used to bake chicken or meat or soup. And vegetables. Not so much like you eat today.

Small amounts?

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We ate carrots, cabbage. But other vegetables which you have got today you didn't have at that time so much. Food in Poland, you couldn't have a lot of food. Because the food from the tropical countries were not imported. You know, an orange was very seldom seen. Poland didn't let in imports, because you need currency for that. What you could have is apples, pears, plums. Only in the season of course. And the season was, of course, negligible. But in the winter - Tomatoes you didn't know also much.

What about drinking. Vodka?

No. No, I've never been a drinker. Milk I like. No. No. I'm not a vodka drinker. Not a smoker, nothing. I never did it. I was always level headed. They said to me that I am a young man with an old head. When I was young. I don't know.

What about the festivals. Were there any particular ways of observing any of them?

It was a very tight family with us. We were very, very, very tight to each other. I couldn't live without family. Family, it was so -

Tell me about your mother?

My mother was a very nice lady.

Her name was?

Rivka. She was a pretty lady. I never - you couldn't anger her. Which is very seldom in a lady. She never - she was a person without - she was good natured. My father was a nervous - he had a lot of responsibilities. But my mother never - she couldn't raise her voice. She would never get angry. She was very dedicated to the children. Very.

And the extended family. Uncles, cousins. Did they come into your life very much?

Yes, we were very, very tight. Very, very bound together.

Would you say there was any big differences in the way you celebrate, say, Purim or Pessah, from the way it is done here?

It is more or less today the same as at that time. But as I said before, it was more original. More - not so much sophisticated. More simple. And more open. Today you can't say - you ask somebody a question. You're never answered yes or no. It's always - the answer is always complicated. And it is the same today in every respect. You have got to keep up with this and with this. Mixed up altogether. And this doesn't go so well.

F471, END OF SIDE A

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F471 Side B

You know as soon as Hitler started to rise to power in '33. So gradually, gradually it heated up in Poland. Anti-semitism started to grow and grow from day to day. It started first to boycott the Jewish shops. To - you know, you had pogroms in Poland before the war.

This was when you were a young man?

Yes. There was - there was in Lwow. In Lodz there was a pogrom. There was another pogrom in a town not far from Lodz. I can't remember the name. A small place. You know what a pogrom is? They used to go into the Jewish shops and they used to plunder it and smack us, to take out everything from the Jews, from the houses and from the shops and from everything. They used to smash them up. There was a lot of pogroms. They killed Jews also. And in the universities they wanted to remove the Jews. Altogether. First they made a status quo. And then they tried to remove them altogether. And Chelna, there was a pogrom. In a small town. It was very, very, very - every day it was hotter and hotter and hotter. And so Hitler started first to annexe Vienna. Then he started in Czechoslovakia. The Sudeten. Then he took altogether the whole of Czechoslovakia. Then the silly Poles started - they took a piece. Also they took from the Czechs. They helped themselves. Then they started with clipediak mam(ph) in the prusia(ph). They took Lita(ph) And then Hitler started with Danzig. And he wanted - because this was a German town. He started to provoke. And soon, you know, the 25th of - of - August - when Ribbentrop has landed in Moscow. You know that. And they made a non-aggression pact. Then it was obvious to everybody that the war is very near. And Friday the 1st of September, 5 o'clock in the morning, I heard the sirens. And - and there was war. In Poland, you know, Poland made a pact here. Beck(ph) was the foreign minister. He came here. And the prime minister was Scubkowski(ph). And they came here to London and they brought them a blank cheque. Where the English government has committed themselves and made a pact that Poland will say that they have been -

Will be guaranteed?

Guaranteed yes. If Poland will say that they have been attacked, then England has got to go and help them. Then they started in Poland to - they wanted England to give them help. This I remember also. And - because they wanted to buy some planes. So the English sent a big general to Poland to see what the Polish army is like. And the Poles have got such a - proud - they showed off. He didn't say anything, he came home. He most probably has given them a very bad report. They said nothing. Empty handed. Then they couldn't stomach it, the Poles. Then they said they'll do it without it. They can do it. Everybody has got to give money to buy aeroplanes.

This was when?

In '38, '39. Must have been. This must have been '38, '39. So everybody has to subscribe. The Jewish people have suffered a lot from this because they took out a lot of money from the Jewish people wherever they could. To subscribe to buy planes.

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They bought a few planes, I don't know. What was the end? Two weeks before the war they said they have got to prepare the planes and everything, to prepare to war. They took it to pieces. When the war - and they came - and it was in pieces. (Laughs) So there is a war started. Eighteen days. And they came - this was Friday morning, the 1st of September. I remember it quite clear. And they came, the Germans came, took some of them on Monday already. Monday dinnertime.

We'll come back to that in a minute. Talking about the pogroms. When Hitler came to power in Germany it raised the temperature in Poland?

In Poland, yes. It had given a boost to the - to the anti-Jewish lobby in Poland. The anti-Jewish people who hated the Jews.

And did they look to Germany for leadership did you think, or not?

They used to shout after the Jews, "Hitler will come, Hitler will come and teach you a lesson".

And when the Nuremburg Laws came in and then there was Kristallnacht. What was the reaction of the Jews?

It was very bitter. I mean - I remember this - I remember this - when they killed this Greenspan(ph). What was it? In Paris was it, yes? Or in Switzerland? You know this sparked off - because a German diplomat was killed.

Yes. By Greenspan(ph)?

Of course everybody got frightened. I mean you could see what has happened. Yeh, yeh, I've forgotten to tell you. After Kristallnacht they took all the Jews who had Polish passports in Germany. And they said they have to go out and the Polish would take them back. And Poland didn't let them back.

What happened to them?

This was in '39. At the beginning of '39. They brought them to the border. There was a place called Zbunchin. And Poland didn't let them in. And the Germans threw them out.

So they had to stay there?

They stayed there. The whole world was quiet. Nobody wants to do anything for them. So in Poland they have gone to collect money for them. And some of them have managed to get out from Zbunchin. I met here people who - And they came to England and to Holland. To Holland is no good. I mean they came to France you know. Afterwards they came to England. And - I remember this quite - My neighbour was also one of these people here. They used to live in Germany, but they had Polish passports. They had been Polish citizens. But Poland didn't want them, the Jews. They didn't want to let them in. And the Germans threw them out. And the whole world was - didn't want to know anything. Nobody - There was an outcry by

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the Jews. But not from the world. The Jews didn't have any voice. Except the American Jews. I don't know.

And what about the Munich Agreement. What did you think about that at the time?

I didn't - I wasn't involved. We did know about it. That Chamberlain sold out Czechoslovakia. And we could see that - Well they still say that Chamberlain didn't have an alternative. Because England didn't have anything.

Well I think that is a question for the historians really?

Well I read a book and it said that he came back from Munich. He did know straight away. He started to organise - the conscription. And started to build up an army. He made a piece of paper which wasn't worth the paper it was written on.

A lot of people have defended him, saying he did his best and he honestly thought that was peace in our time?

No, no, he himself didn't believe it. The Americans didn't want to know. Do you know the Americans didn't want to know. Do you know that in the beginning of the war - America used to sell to Germany raw materials for the purpose of the war to build tanks and so on.

I didn't know that?

Yes. And here they made - you know in the beginning they didn't do anything here. They only had a blockade on the seas. They didn't let in anything to Germany. So the Americans - the Germans have brought from the Americans, raw materials and everything. And the Americans have delivered to Germany these raw materials with their own ships. And the English couldn't do anything. They couldn't torpedo American ships. And the Americans didn't want to know anything. America was going around saying "well it is not our business. We've got nothing to do with it". This is human nature. You should believe this. This is human nature. You find it always. If you see something happen, everybody thinks this doesn't concern me. Until he sees it is in his house he doesn't want to do anything. And the same is between nation and nation. And if you want to know what's going on in the world, you should go to the kindergarten and see how the children are playing, how they're talking openly. They don't cover anything. They say straight away how it goes. The same goes in Mrs Thatcher's cabinet. The same place, it's no different, only more sophisticated and covered up. But the original thing is in kindergarten. And people have not learned anything from history. History is repeating itself. It comes again and you do the same fault and it happens again. Nobody wants to know for the others. Nobody wants to do anything for them. Only if it affects them. So long as it doesn't him he won't touch it, he wouldn't do anything. He doesn't want to know.

So when Hitler was making a fuss about Danzig, did the Jewish people start to feel that ....?

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The people who hardly could live. Poor people. I mean there were a few rich people, but not in the western meaning, rich, you know. But they didn't have real power, they didn't have anything. So what could they do. They had fight from day to day, from hand to mouth. Look what is happening in Ethiopia. People are dying from hunger. What's happening in Hanoi. Pol Pot. Killing each other. Nobody wants to know anything. So why should they look for the Jews. Who is interested? Nobody is interested. Why should we go look to the goyem(ph). The Jews themselves don't want to know anything one from the other.

Do you think that was the attitude of the Jews in Poland, when the Jews in Germany and in Austria, for example, first suffered?

Yeh, the Jews couldn't do much. Nobody - do you know there were ships going on the sea and nobody wants to let them in. In Poland they used to shout "Jews to Madagascar".

Yes, that was a plan for quite a while?

Yeh. There was a very bad climate there. This was a French island.

A French colony?

Colony. But nobody wants to take them in. Nobody wants to welcome them. The same with the English. All the same. They didn't want to know anybody. In the war here I had - I have a cousin in Israel. He lives in Banabrak(ph). His father-in-law is called Mya Simpilanski(ph). A professor of the Berlin University. And he was here a few years. They sent him here you know, in 1965. They opened the archives you know. They made 30 years. Before it was 50 years. When you can look in the government's archives from the war. So they started here to see what's happening in the war. And they sent him here too, he was serving here. He came every week and he told me what he has seen here. They didn't want to know at all what's going on with the Jews. They only tried to get out of it. I tell you another time - he told me a lot of things. You wouldn't believe it. You know how did it come to make the Balfour declaration. What he told me. You know in 1917 - they were not interested to help the Jews. In 1917 when the revolution was in Russia, Russia was an ally for England in the First War. And when the revolution came then they lost them. They stopped to fight on the side of the allies. So at that time there was a saying that the Communists and Bolshoviks are all Jews. So the English Secret Service - he has seen it here in the archives - came with a report to say that the Germans want to declare - in order to win the sympathy of the Jews in Russia, who are the rulers, they want to declare Israel for a country for the Jews. This was the Secret Service in England. And this came for a meeting when Balfour was foreign secretary. So they made a meeting and decided that they are going to do it before the Germans do it. And this was the Balfour declaration. And you have seen it in the papers at the same time - four weeks later that they made a big mistake. Because also the Germans did consider this. But the allies from the Germans were Turkey - there was Von Parten(ph). And he was a friend of Turkey. And Turkey was ruler in Israel. So the Germans couldn't do it. So they had to refrain from doing this. This is what he told me. He has seen it in the cabinet meetings minutes. And here you make such a holy man as Lord

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Balfour. (Laughs). Lord Balfour wasn't interested in the Jews like - like we are interested in the Ethiopians.

It was a historical accident in other words?

You didn't know that.

I didn't know that?

He told me a lot of things. You wouldn't believe it what he has seen here in the archives. From the meetings. From the cabinet meetings and the whole thing.

The day that war broke out?

Yes. It was a Friday.

Tell me about it. What was it like?

It was very, very - everybody was very - heavy hearted. Everybody - nobody could imagine that it is going to be what has happened. Nobody could. Even in '42. Even they took away the Jews from Chrzanow. And the Jewish eltestratte(ph) was - they appointed a man called Moisha Marine(ph). Because they didn't want to be with every Jew. So they appointed a committee. They called it the elkestratte(ph). Like you find in the bible. And they had been to their services. And they said to him "3,000 Jews today, 8 o'clock, have got to be delivered". So he delivered it. If he didn't deliver it he'd go to Auschwitz. And he was saying, he said he has got already letters from the first transports, they are very well off, they are in the east.

Yes, deception?

Have you seen The Holocaust. There's this film The Holocaust.

Lanceman(ph)?

Lanceman(ph). The Holocaust was before that.

I think I have, yes. A television series I think it was?

Yeh, it's very good. For that first week of war. As the Germans got closer and closer?

It was very, very - you know - soon, the 24th of August, there was a mobilisation in Poland. And everybody from 18 to 50 had got to go to the forces. And -

That included the Jews?

Of course it included the Jews.

So was there a rush to enlist?

Yeh. Yeh.

And you signed up?

I wasn't 18.

You must have been nearly 18?

Nearly. But I wasn't.

So did any of your friends sign up?

Yeh, my - one of my uncles. The Jews in Poland - specially the orthodox have never gone to the - conscripted. They tried to get out of it. Because it was very bitter, you know, together to be with the non-Jews. They discriminated them. It just was impossible.

And you couldn't keep kosher?

Not only this. It just - I mean terrible. Terrible. So usually they got out of it somehow. For money. All type of things.

And then Hitler came. And presumably the local fascists were jubilant?

We didn't have much to do, because they straight away created ghettos. The Jewish population, they consecrated - they took them out from the villages and the small towns, to bigger towns. And they created certain areas where the Jews have got to be only there. They made a wall around. Because they said that the Jews are - have got psoriasis. You know what - a skin disease. A contagious skin disease. And they didn't dare to come near. So the Jews with their own money had to build a wall to be separated from them. And they created these Jewish committees. And the Jews have still got to work. And they got very little to eat. And without any payment. And the bigger ghettos. They had to get the money, which was worthless. You couldn't go out, you couldn't do anything.

But before all this, the Germans were coming across from the west and pushing towards the east?

And because we were maybe 40 miles from the border, already Monday dinnertime they were there. There was no fighting around our town.

What was it like when they came?

The first day they came in they had gone around all the houses. All the Jews they collected from the houses. And assembled them in the Shules. Synagogues. And they have beaten them up. And gone around the houses, looked to see that they haven't got any ammunition or things like that. And they took away everything what they could find valuable. This was the first day.

What happened to you that day?

I was in a cellar. They couldn't find me. A lot of Jews have gone west. And the first day when they came they met 120 Jews, 132 Jews. Walking. They walked because there was no transport to go. On the way between Chrzanow, my town, and Tshiblina. Tshiblina is 8 miles from Chrzanow. On the way was a sport stadium. They took the 132 Jews. They put them out on the stadium. And they shoot them all. And left them like this. One of these people which was shot in the lungs, when they had gone away he was still alive. So somehow he managed to get out. And he got into a house. Had a doctor. And he was still alive. And I was with him in the camps. And he was still alive. His name was Simcha Steinberg. And after the war he was living in Antwerp. He showed me afterwards this shirt where they shot him through. And this 132 were - they called other Jews to dig a big grave. So they put them in this grave. But afterwards - a few months later - the Germans have put them in Chrzanow. The police chief was called Shindler. And the administrator from the Germans was called Lilterlung. A German. He was our administrator. And there was a Jew called Usha Friedman. He was a butcher before the war. A very simple man. Somehow he got to know this Lilterlung. You know the Germans like coffee. And they didn't have coffee enough. So there was still some coffee in Jewish hands. And he took them coffee and presents and - and gold and silver and diamonds. So this Lilterlung has allowed to take out this grave from the stadium. And to bring it to Chrzanow, to the cemetery, to the Jewish cemetery. And they are laying in the Chrzanow Jewish cemetery specially in a corner with a small fence, this 132 Jews.

So they were reburied later?

Later.

They must have been the first victims?

These were the first victims in our town.

Why had they walked?

Because they wanted to run away from the Germans.

But they were running towards them?

No, no. No, no, no. They caught them on the way.

You were hiding in your cellar with your family?

With my father. He had in our house a few places where - I was keeping out with all type of things, you know. There is a lot to talk to you. This is only a start, you know. This is a background. They made the first time a Jewish committee and they put in a person who was - who was - a smith called Sweiber(ph). I've got it written down, this, in Polish, short notes, you know, the names.

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F471, END OF SIDE B

F475 Side A

There is something you forgot to tell me?

Yes.

Maybe you would like to tell me about it now?

What about.

About when they left the Jews behind to liquidate the ghetto?

Yeh. I just read it. Left 8 Jews to liquidate the ghetto. And to liquidate - you know - as I mentioned before - to liquidate - there was a factory - to liquidate this factory also, because there were machines and so on. And through these 8 Jews they made it public that these people who were still in hiding, that they should come out and there wont happen anything to them. There was all tricks. So 150 Jews came out. And Dreher, who I mentioned, I mentioned his name before, from the Gestapo. Came.

This was after you had left?

Yeh. This was when I was in hiding. After other people came to run, they told us. So they made also a Jewish kitchen, you know, for soup. You know, to give some soup to the people. And so 150 people they still collected. And Dreher took them away. Also the rabbi from the town and his whole family. And you know this camp in Sosnowiece was called ZAL. Zwankarbislager(ph). ZAL. We got to know also that this Staner and this other four from the police. From the Jewish police. At the last minute when they have done all these services for the Germans, at the last minute they put them into the train, they are also going to Auschwitz together with the others. They were hoping. And the man from the Gestapo in Katowice was called Kronow(ph). And when he left he said "Kronow(ph) will be called Kranow(ph). Because he cleared out all the Jews from Chrzanow". The burgermeister - the head mayor - said that in Chrzanow he is happy that there is no more Judenfrie(ph). Bautrup Nord Klobutsk - SS.

This was the place ...?

Where we were working in these goods camps. I didn't give you the exact date. This was the 22nd of August. When Linde came to liquidate. We had been in the train a day - I can't remember - we didn't know where we go. When we arrived they opened the train. They took us out. We are in Blechhammer. This was a very big place Blechhammer. This was in Slasia. And this was a factory like you've got here, ICI. The Germans had a firm called the Egefharb Industry(ph). You know, they are both probably still in existence. And the Egefharb Industry they had a place in Blechhammer. A big factory. And there were not only Jews, there were all nationalities. Italian and Russians. And they had different camps. And different treatment of course. The Jews had a concentration camp. And there was a Jewish camp. A concentration camp. In Blechhammer. They brought us to Blechhammer.

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There were 10,000 Jews still there. Working for the Egefharb. And Blechhammer was put around, you know, for air attacks. I can remember that. They didn't let us into the camp. As you most probably know, the camps were with electric wires. A double fence. And between one fence and the other was 8 metres. Even if you get through if you touch the wire it was electric, it was killing. But there was another one also. And there were towers with SS. Who watched with machine guns. We were 8 days in Blechhammer. And the whole transport was 330 Jews. At that time there was an attack on Hitler.

This was when they tried to put a bomb on his plane I think?

Not on a plane. In his office. And the SS who were looking after the camp, beside these towers they used to walk up and down with a gun. With a carbine. There was Italian SS outside. And we didn't have papers, we didn't have a radio. But these SS they were shouting "(SPOKEN IN GERMAN)". We heard that.

They were telling each other the news?

Yes.

They were angry about it?

No, they were happy. They are talking against him. They were hoping that they will kill him and it is finished. You know - all of a sudden the whole thing took a - At that time they didn't know - maybe it was a day till it was clear that he is still alive. He was injured a bit. But he was still alive. You know I have got a friend here who was in Auschwitz at that time. In Auschwitz they told him that it was possible that they are going to get free. But unfortunately he wasn't killed and it was carrying on.

So you were there for 8 days and they wouldn't let you into the camp?

No.

So where did they keep you?

Just a minute. They keep us between the two wires. And they brought us soup or whatever it is supposed to be. And then this Hausschild, the Judenhandler which I mentioned yesterday you remember. He came. And he selected out the young people to camps where he had allocated them to the firms to work. And 330 were left, which was a mixed bundle. Because I was with my father who wasn't anymore young. My brother was a young boy, 11 years. He was always making himself taller than he was. So he came. And he said that he wants the old and the young, he doesn't need them. Send them to Auschwitz. You know in the concentration camps there was - the leader of the lager was called the lagerfuhrer. This was an SS. A German. The Germans tried to keep out of the camp because the Jews are full with leprosy. But the opposite number from him was the lageraltester. Which got the orders from the lagerfuhrer. To count up the Jews every day the SS came. If something wasn't like they want they called in this - every block had a block lageraltester. The oldest. Everywhere was the same. The lageraltester in Blechhammer was a Jew called

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Demerer(ph). A very good man. He had a language somehow with the administration of the factory. And with the SS. And he got to know that Hausschild wants to take away - there was 40 children. So what he has done he talked to the administration of the factory. And they have demanded that they need 40 young boys. And he made such a column to work. And he saved those 40 boys. To remain in Blechhammer. And Blechhammer wasn't such a terrible camp. It was a very bad camp in a way. But you worked hard. It was clean. There wasn't lice. And eating wasn't too bad.

So you actually ended up in the camp?

No, I didn't. So these 40 children. Singer Shainburg(ph) was also together with us. And he had a son. A young boy. And he was put in this column for the 40 young children. My brother was put also to this. But he didn't want to. He wanted to be together with us. So he didn't. The rest was 330 people. And we didn't know what is going to happen with us. Because he sent away this, he sent away this. Then they had a meeting. Ludwig and Hausschild. And we heard it, open. They had a business fight. Ludwig said "you have to take all the 330 Jews. All the young. You can't select". And Hausschild said no. He wants only the young. We heard it. So in the end Hausschild took all the 330. They took us again to trains. And we came to a camp called Graeditz. Also in Slasia. This was a terrible camp. This was an old fashioned mill, you know, where they made flour. It used to be a big old building. And it was high ceilings and they divided it into two, with a division, from timber. And it was dirty, without water, without anything. We came to Graeditz.

How far in the train was it?

It wasn't too long. The girls he sent - this Hausschild - to Sudetenland. There was an industry from cotton. My sister was also in Sudetenland. And this is Czechoslovakia. The German part of it. And I heard afterwards that these 40 children in Blechhammer. One day Hausschild came and took them away to Auschwitz. And this Singer Shainburg(ph) survived the war. He was still alive after the war. And his son did not. Because Hausschild took him away. In this lager in Graeditz they put everybody - they didn't put us in these pyjamas. But it was painted. And beside that we had a 'Jude' here. We had to have also on the back 'Jude'. So everybody can see that we are Jews. As soon as we came to this Graeditz they took us to the washroom. There wasn't water. There wasn't a kitchen. To sleep was three -

Bunks?

Not bunks. It was straw only. There were already Jews there. It wasn't that we were the first. And there were 1600 Jews. And every day we had to go to work. At 3 o'clock in the morning there was appell, you know, they woke us up. They give us coffee. It wasn't coffee, it was - there wasn't real coffee - there was something like sagoya(ph).

Chicory?

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Chicory, yeh. They had everything alsutz(ph). 3 o'clock they wake us up. 3.45 was appell. 4.15 was ausmarsh(ph). And we had to go, 1600 people, to Langbilau. To make extensions to the rails.

What do you mean?

The railways.

So you were working on the railway. And Graeditz was just where you stayed?

Yeh. In Langbilau we were working. We were 1600 Jews. In 12 carriages. At 7.15 we have gone back to the camp. And the work was terrible. And when we came back to the camp it was 9 o'clock already. And every night there were a lot of dead people which you couldn't - Once it happens that three of the inhabitants of the haflinger(ph). They called us haflinger(ph). Have run away. Two they found. And they kicked them to death. And they put them in a bunker. They were still alive for a week. And then they died. Then Major Linde came again. Where there was trouble he was - everywhere. He was a roving devil. When he had seen a Jew he was white, he wanted to eat them up. Grrrhhh. Like a dog. You've never seen such an animal. Never seen in my life such an animal. And in the end he took them to Auschwitz. The Judenaltester - as I have mentioned before, there was a lageraltester. A blockaltester. He was called Zygood(ph). And he had done everything what the Gestapo wanted.

Tell me about the work?

He says different. He says that we were building the barracks. Brick barracks. In Langbilau. Barracks. This railway was later.

What were you doing. Bricklaying?

Bricklaying. Bricklayers were bricklayers. We were only labourers. We carried up the - You know I am twisted. Can't you see I am like this. This is from the camp. My back is twisted like an 'S'. It is called skipooscleosis(ph). This is all because I carried up cement. And bricks. And everything what you need. We were accessories to this. They treated us like dogs you know. "Quick, quick, higher". If you fall down you fall down.

Were you working with your father and brother then?

Yes.

In the same place?

Yes. A few weeks later there came a transport of Jews from France and Holland. They came not direct from France. They had already been in another camp which was called Filsengrober(ph). They didn't look like human beings. They were skeletons. They looked much worse than we. And they died much quicker, like flies. Because they were not - we as Polish Jews we were used to suffering. But they

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couldn't take the strain. From these people was an artist from Paris called Wolf. But this is important. You never know. One day, somebody from my town called Mandelbaum(ph), fell down and became unconscious and nobody took any notice of him. The assistants from the Judenaltester was called Schmillsherer. He was from Sosnowiece. And he said to this Mandelbaum(ph) he is only playing. There is nothing wrong with him. And he kicked him and smacked him. For the ill people there was a room which was called the revere(ph). And the haushid used to come if there was a few people. In the revere(ph) he either shoots them or he took them to Auschwitz. And if somebody had to treat them for a little thing he says he can work, he is okay. And this day two Jews from Holland have run away from the camp. The SS who were looking for them, they didn't realise it, only where we worked. So all of us they smacked us and kicked us and done everything possible terrible because these two Dutch Jews have run away. The lagerfuhrer as I mentioned before was an SS. His name was Kiske. I've got all the names. This is important. Soon he got to know that these two have run away. He got mad. And it was impossible. And this Mandelbaum which I mentioned before, was on the revere(ph). He got to him and he smacked him. And then he took him to the washroom. And put on him the showers, the hot and cold for ten minutes. And finished him off. We all got smacked. And it was a terrible lager. For the smallest things they killed and smacked. As I mentioned before the lageraltester was Reingood(ph). If somebody will run away everybody will be shot. And next day at 11 o'clock in the night these two people, these two Dutch Jews, they have been captured. They brought them to the camp and they hang them up. And we were called out in the middle of the night. We got extra soup for that. And they were hanging and they gave us soup. The mentality.

What was the food like there?

I have forgotten to tell you. In the camps they used to give us spinach soup they called it. Straw you know, it comes packed in squares. Bright straw. This was dried grass. And it was written on it "only for Jews and Bolsheiviks". And this they used to cook for us. And we didn't have any plates. They used to give us from tins. And this they used to give us to eat. The soup.

Just this dried hay?

A kind of grass. And in the end, you know, after - there was a lot of sediment in the bottom. You take it in the mouth. It made a noise, it wasn't clean. And for this you got usually diarrhoea. And the diarrhoea finished off a lot of people.

And you saw people dying?

Oh like flies. I myself had diarrhoea. We come to this later.

And bread to go with it?

Bread you had every day. It depends on the times. I can't remember. Unless I come to it. Because it is written here about it. The cook of the camp, a Jew, was called Browner(ph). Shmilleckscherer(ph) was assistant to the lageraltester. And both the cook and the assistant had smacked all the people. We heard from the dark the

shouting and the crying out. Every night there was a barrack where they used to smack the people. We heard the crying and the shouting. You could recognise if they smacked a Polish Jew he was shouting "oy, oy, oy". A Hungarian was saying "yoy". And a French was different. I can't remember. They had different expressions. When they caught these two people there was a whole holiday. They were so happy. And in the camp they have given us soup. And they put on their reflectors that everybody should see how these two people are hanging.

How did everyone feel about that?

How could you feel. It was very, very, very bad. After a time they changed my work. And they sent me to Reichenbach. Here we built an extension for the railway line. And a firm Shuff(ph). The meister was called Nuslar(ph). He was an old man over 70. He had demanded terrible work. He was going with his watch looking. You know we used to dig - we used to level out the ground. So where it was a hill we made it lower. So there was lorries. You know what lorries are.

F475, END OF SIDE A

F475 Side B

A lorry has one and three quarters of a metre of earth. So he put on a lorry four people. And he wanted every ten minutes the lorry should be loaded up with earth. Dug out earth and loaded up. And go down to the place where it is lower. And turn it over and come back. And he was timing it at ten minutes. It was terrible.

And you were just digging and digging and digging?

Yeh. A lot of people died. They couldn't manage.

How did you manage?

At that time, when we changed the - you know this was going on rails. And you know when this was levelled out we moved it further on. These iron rails. So at that time my left leg got damaged from the rail extension. With bad feet I had to go to work. And my friends have helped me out.

What happened to your feet?

Here in this place I got squeezed. The bone was squeezed. I survived thank God. Twelve hours we had to work like this.

And you were closely guarded I presume?

Yeh. Usually - I don't know what it is called in English - you know where the lorries are going on this iron.

The rails or the sleepers?

The rails. Now if you move them from one place to another you have to unscrew them. And screw them again, you know, because you want them in another place. The meister didn't want to let us unscrew them because it took too much time. So we had to move it in the whole pieces. It was too heavy. Therefore it damaged my leg. It was too heavy. One Sunday the whole camp was liquidated. And we came to a neighbouring camp called Faulbrueck. This was an ex-factory. And it was called beshdantlager(ph). This is a point where - you see because in the area there were a lot of these camps. So this was a magazine for the camps. Beshdantlager(ph). This was a terrible place. They smacked us. This was a place where ninety nine percent of people couldn't stand it any more. The lagerfuhrer before was Kiske. Here he was Czaja. Near there was another camp was called Ganardafry(ph). There the Judenaltester was Davidovitch(ph). He was before Filstengoober(ph) which I mentioned also before. In Filstengoober(ph) there was a contagious illness. Then they have liquidated this camp. And the rest which were still alive they brought to Faulbrueck. And this day the Judenhandler Hausschild came. He wanted to see his animals, are they alive. His slaves or whatever you call it. After we came back from the work they made a lagerspeder(ph) in the night. That means that no people come in or out. And 12 o'clock in the night - from this camp, from Ganardafry(ph), they

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brought the people who had survived the illness, he shot there. Hausschild shot there. Shot them. And then this Davidovitch(ph) was also shot by Hausschild. The 12th of November '43, when we came home at 7.30 from the work, they made an appeal. And they let us wait. And they took us to the station. And they took from Faulbrueck 150 Jews to Markstadt. Markstadt was a big camp. And the lageralteste was borokmeister(ph) from Shakova(ph). This was a different work. This was Krupps work. We built - you know Krupp - He had a daughter called Bertha. And we built a whole factory called Bertha-werke. The Jews built it in Markstadt. And in 36 hours we were in this train. And we came to this camp. The camp was clean. And the camp made a good impression. It was much better than Faulbrueck and Graeditz. There was underwear. Everybody had underwear. You could wash it. There was a washroom. And there was organised everything.

And the sleeping was better?

It wasn't three. Only two stages. And barracks - it was wooden barracks, but still more - And you could have a bath after the work.

And the work was again the same?

No, no, the work was even worse. The work was very hard. The work was terrible. We came - we made an extension - gas pipes. We had to bring in the gas pipes from somewhere far away to this Bertha-werke. You know, big gas pipes. So they took us every day. Our commando was 15 kilometres in the Yungfosay(ph). And this was fields, empty fields, where we had to dig. The ground was sand. To find the level we had to put in these pipes, gas pipes. And because it was so sandy when you came deep the sand used to fall in. And it was winter, very cold. We hadn't anything to put on. And it was very cold. From 7 o'clock in the morning till 7 o'clock at night. And even when it was raining or snowing. The firm was called F.G. Slasinferngas. The meister, he was a sadist. If somebody was one minute not working he'd kick them and throw them into the water. He had a stick and he broke the stick quite often from the smacking. People were hungry and frozen. There was snow and very cold. This commander started off with 500 people. And after the winter not a lot have survived from this hard work. Most of them were ill. When we came back to the camp it was every night between 9 and 10. Because we had to go with the train. And this train didn't come regular because this was - this wasn't a train - it was for animals to transport. Not for human beings. Not an ordinary train. In the camp there were two Jewish policemen. Called lager. One was called Mock(ph). The other one was called Bossack(ph). Whoever falls into their hands didn't live anymore. For me it wasn't so bad there. My brother who lives in America was a little boy. Somehow - you know these SS when they took us out to the work they were also in a very bad position. Because they had to go out very early in the morning. If we came back late, they came back late. And we were still there in the fields where there was no fire, there was no shielding from the weather. And they had like a shelter you know. And they used to make a fire. So they took out my brother because he was such a young boy. They took him out that he should serve them you know. He should clean. So one day in the mornings - it's not written here - I remember that clear. They told him they need water. Drinking water. So they ask him to go to the village to bring water. They showed him where to go. So he's gone with this bucket to bring the water. He

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came into a farm. And they ask for water. He looked such a poor boy. And he said he is hungry. So they have given him potatoes. And he brought back the bucket of water. And I was digging the earth. He just walked by and he had here on the trousers a string. He took out the string and a few potatoes fall out for me and for my father. The next day they sent him again. So every day he brought water for them. And he didn't work, he was only serving them. They ask him do that, do that. He made the fire. And it was good for him. And he brought me every day potatoes. Cooked potatoes. You know what this means? Soon we have gone out from the camp and the SS called him out. He was standing together with me and my father. "Come here, come here". They have given him the rifle to carry. He was carrying for them the rifle. And they took him. This was good. One day he told this farmer that the SS hadn't got any meal to eat. She said "bring them here". So he told them that they should go with him to the farm. So the leader from the SS has gone there. So every morning they came to work they have gone with him away and they didn't look after us much. And then before we had to go back they came back from the farm. And the leader from the SS - there was a young daughter there. And he started to love her. It was a joke. And my brother was a chaperone. (Laughs). So this was going for a time. And every day he brought me potatoes to eat plenty. Not only he brought me, he brought for others also. Because he was already feeling - you know - And one day the Judenaltester, you know, who supervised the work there was called Altervine(ph). There was a boy from my town, from Chrzanow, was called Tarshalipshis(ph). He was a brother of my uncle. Archavitsis(ph) had a meister there. A German. Who brought him sometimes a potato. And you know this was a question of life and death. This Altervine(ph) has noticed that this Archavitsis(ph) has these potatoes and he took away the potatoes. So Archavitsis(ph) came to my brother. He didn't know that my brother knows well the SS. It was good for everybody, because they were not watching us. He said to my young brother "if you don't give him back the potatoes I'll -". So he had to give him back the potatoes. But he couldn't stomach this. Do you know what he has done? He made a complaint in the camp that the SS is not looking after us properly. There came an inspection. There was one higher up and he had one hand. Because of the war. He came. And there was nobody there from the SS. And my brother was there. So he took him also to the farm. And they gave him something to eat. But they changed the guard. So these new people came. So this young Altervine(ph) has gone the next day to my brother and he smacked him and he said "you go to work. Finish". But the new people who came had the recommendation of the previous ones and they took him out again. So this kept me alive. He kept me and my father alive all the time. I mean this is unbelievable. So after the war my brother told me, when I was in America, he met Altervine(ph). He came to him. "Go away from me. Do you remember what you have done at that time". He ran away from him. When I was in America, when my brother made the wedding for his daughter, I told this everybody in public, because this is a big thing what he has done. A young boy. Okay. Now we go over to the 25th of March '44. There was a selection. This was on a Tuesday. I remember this. It was snowing. Everybody has to be naked. And running in the street. And the doctor has got to see how fit you are. And you have to go - and the commission from the doctors, they have selected the people. They selected out from these Jews 1,000 people. And these 1,000 people had been left in Markstadt. And the rest have gone over to Funfteichen. Which was not far. Funfteichen was a different camp. This was at that time up till now we didn't have these pyjamas and we didn't have a number.

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And on the 25th of March everybody of us had to give us whatever he has. And he got pyjamas. Without underwear. And with a 'Jude' here. And a number. My number was 25000440. 25000440 was my number from the camp. And my father they took out. And he was left in Markstadt. And me they took to Funfteichen. Funfteichen we worked at the same works. Only a different camp with a different SS.

So you were still working for the Krupp?

Krupp, yes.

And how was this camp different?

There was not only Jews. It was a very, very big camp. Funfteichen. Were all nationalities. But not people, ordinary people who have not been punished. Because they have open camps. This is nationalities which the Germans have punished them for something. Or for nothing possibly also. And they put them in the same camps as the Jews. But they were treated better than the Jews. We had a yellow -. Each nationality had a different -. There were Germans also. We had once a lageraltester who was a German. And he killed his wife. And he was better treated than we. He got parcels from home. He could send letters. And he got cigarettes. We were the worst. When we came into the camp they smacked us. And the second day we realised where we are. The blockaltester - every night - there was like a dining room. There were stools. You mustn't sit on the stools. Not chairs or stools. And they were from timber. And every night they'd give us glass to clean the stools. But not to sit on them. Every night when we came back from the work they made exercises with us. And they made the exercises everybody has got to sit low. You have to hold a stool in the hand. And on top of the stool a bottle, a glass bottle. If you move a bit the bottle falls down. And they smacked you. And even there was a bathroom. A collective bathroom. We couldn't use it. Only every night they brought a bucket of water. And they give two soaps. And everybody was washing themselves. And every night we have to clean ourself from the lice.

And what was the sleeping quarters like?

It was nearly like in Markstadt. Every day at 5.30 we had to march out from the camp. And you know the SS who have looked after us, one for five. So there was a long, long queue when we marched out of the camp. The SS marched out a mile, or longer. Till when we came to the end of the SS, there was a whole way full with the SS. With dogs. And it was on the gate 'Arbeit Matri'(ph), like in Auschwitz. And music was playing. This was a typical concentration camp. With all the things.

Who were the musicians?

Jews. From us. They have also gone to work. But first they have to play the music. And when we came home. And there was appells for hours. Appells at the work. And appells in the camp. You know, counted and counted again.

And your father?

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My father was already taken away from us. Only my brother and I. We couldn't go out from the block. You have to go quick. You know in these pyjamas we hadn't any pockets. Because a worker must have pockets. You know every night - sometimes there came a truck with cement sacks. It could be 12 o'clock in the night. There was a rule that if a truck with cement or anything comes, it mustn't stay longer than six hours. In six hours it must be emptied that it should roll again. So it was no difference if it was Sunday or Saturday or 12 o'clock or 1 o'clock in the night. Because once there came a train with cement. A whole train. "Out". And unload it. And the next day, or whenever you finished this, you had still to go to work. We didn't have any underwear. It was very cold, you know, and hungry. So you used to put in under the pyjamas these paper sacks from the cement. The SS, they didn't dare to touch a Jew, but with a stick. They wanted to try if you haven't got these paper sacks. They touched it, and paper makes a noise. They smacked you hard for that. Very hard.

And did you put the cement bags on?

Of course. We were frozen. We were shivering. And we got work which no nationality wanted to do. The worst work. And we were treated the worst. Every day was about 20 deaths from the work. In the beginning we used to go through a way where we could see ordinary people walking. But afterwards they didn't the outside people should see us. To see the whole thing was happening. They made a special way where nobody could see us. And you know the wires from the camp were made in such a way that we could see what's going on outside, but outside couldn't see what's going on inside. That people shouldn't be able to see what's going on. And then, you know, on the appell platz they made "mitzen auf, mitzen down". And sometimes we had to turn around this jacket from the pyjamas. From the front to the back. And you had to lay down on the appell platz and take off pieces of stones and collect them in the front. And then go around and around the camp and throw it out. And on the way the Germans were looking out and laughing at us. And sometimes they throw a cigarette.

F475, END OF SIDE B

F476 Side A

A cigarette or a cucumber. And because everybody was hungry then nobody had it because everybody was - they were laughing, you know, just to -

How were you feeling now. You were used to the camp life. You were trying to survive?

A lot of people have thrown themselves up from the ...? and got killed. I told you they had these dogs trained. And they said "Jude". And they jumped. At that time there was no more any supply of Jewish workers. Because all were liquidated. And the other nations didn't want to do this work what we have done. You know every week between 20 and 30 people - you know the headquarters of this camp was Gross-Rosen, as I mentioned to you. And in Gross-Rosen was a crematorium. They didn't want to bury - that there should be some signs or anything later. So they wanted to burn them. So every week there has gone to Gross-Rosen about 50, 70, 100 people to burn. And then came an order that they should treat us better. Because they didn't have any supplies for new working force. And the old were dying out. And the other nations nobody wanted to do this work. So these people who have smacked so much - there was a Polish lageraltester. Yussick he was called. And the others who smacked us. And one day there came an order and they took them away to Gross-Rosen. And they came back. I don't know what they have done with them. But from this time onwards they were not allowed to smack us so much. They treated us - they have given us a little bit more to eat. And they treat us a little bit better. You know in the war you used to go to shelters.

Air-raid shelters?

Yes. There were also air-raid shelters. If there was an air-raid we were not allowed to go to the shelters. Only the Germans. We didn't have anywhere to go. But they used the shelters to throw us in for punishment and so on. Or they put us under water. The worst thing was on a Sunday. On the appell platz for hours. Every Sunday everybody has to - there was a barber. There wasn't a barber, one of the hefflinger(ph). He had two inches with a razor knife. To make it that you shouldn't be able to run away. Two inches. You never knew about that?

Prisoners always had very short hair?

Even so. Of course we had short hair. This was with a knife.

A strip. A bald strip?

A bald strip. Like the beard. No, nothing. Every Saturday this was compulsory. And they give us 33 dekas(ph) of bread. And the other nations used to get 55 dekas(ph) a day. This was better. Russians were also in this camp. A lot of Russians. The Russians used to run away. And when a Russian ran away they kept us on the appell platz for days. If somebody didn't work properly he didn't get the bread. This reve(ph), the place where the ill people were, every day were 20 or 30 -

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He was smacked. And if he didn't shout he got for that a reward, cigarettes. If he didn't shout. (Laughs). There was a firm called Betamonier(ph). Beton and Bonerembow(ph). Whoever worked for this firm didn't live long.

What did they do?

I didn't work for them. There was another firm called Green and Billfinger(ph). Lens and Bartel(ph). Also terrible. I told you about the cement before. When the cement came the SS was mad. You know, they have gone out and with the rifles have smacked.

Were there any guards or anyone in particular you can remember from there?

I have to look here in the notes. Once when we had gone to the work I noticed that a German woman has seen us and she started to cry. We were called 'Commander Shper'(ph). You know Shper(ph) was the minister of work or whatever he was. We were under this Commander Shper(ph). Later, every day from the work they took home the dead people with a lorry. There was dead people every day a lot. And every Wednesday they sent to Gross-Rosen between 70 and 80 dead. Doctor Zubruna(ph). He was the revere doctor. A Jew. Lageraltester. The lagerkappo, this is the man who used to smack. This was Yashick(ph), which I mentioned, a Pole. He was terrible. There came also an order that they shouldn't give us any more this soup. This so-called spinach. Because this was killing off the people. They used to say to us that we are swindlers. SPOKEN IN GERMAN .....

....? is vegetables. Dried vegetables they called this soup. They called us swindlers. One asked why are we swindlers. He says "because if you live more than four weeks here, in these conditions, this means that you are evading the orders. You don't work properly or you get something to eat more". So we are swindlers because of that. (Laughs).

Amazing?

Amazing. I worked for a firm called Gebel. The beaufuhrer(ph) was Shafer(ph). He was blind in one eye. He was a terrible man. The supervisor for the work came from Cracow. He was a Pole who makes himself for a German. His name was Vrona(ph). I have seen with my own eyes how this Vrona(ph) has smacked a Jewish boy called Isgovitch(ph). There was a place called Semoshitz(ph). He killed him. He took a shovel and killed him with it.

What work were you doing when you were at the Gebel?

Levelling out the ground.

And your father?

My father wasn't anymore with me.

Your brother?

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My brother. At this time when it was the attempt on Hitler. They made for us terrible exercises. We had to stand on one leg and with the other hand touch the ground. Like this.

And this was July 1944?

Somewhere. After the rising of the Warsaw ghetto. Not the Warsaw ghetto, rising for Warsaw, Poland. They brought a lot of Polish people to the camp. This time they made a selection. It doesn't say here about that. It doesn't say that they brought Jews. I was wrong. They made a selection and they took out 403 Jews. And this 403 Jews should have been sent to Gorlitz. Because they brought Polish people. And the Polish people were in better condition than we were. The Jews were already worn out. We were not allowed to work inside, only on the construction outside. You had to have tremendous physical strength. And the Jews were not so strong anymore. Therefore they took together 403 Jews and they wanted to send us to Gorlitz. They took us to block 28. And the blockaltester was a Jew from Jejitz(ph), which is near Chrzanow. And his name was Kalingeeser(ph). On Monday - it was a Monday - they took us out of the barracks. And they took us to three carriages. You know like animals. In railway carriages. The 403 Jews. And it was terrible. You couldn't move. We were in this train three days without any eating. It was very hot. Before we went away from Finstiren(ph), they took away from us - if somebody had a belt. They take away the belt. They take away all the shoes.

So you were in bare feet and without any belts?

Yes. They took away from us also the pyjamas. They put us in civil things. But on the back they cut out a hole in the shape of a Star of David. And this private thing. They took paint and made lines. I say here that I will never forget this - After we came to Gorlitz they hushed us out from the carriages. The lageraltester was a German. His name was Check(ph). He was blind in one eye. And he killed - He was a German. Because he killed his wife they put him in the concentration camps. And because he was a German he had much more right than we. I mean and he was in charge of us. He got parcels from outside and post. But still he was in the concentration camp. He was running around with such a pycher(ph). And the whole day he was - he used to hit us. We were without shoes, hungry. After three days laying - you know in these animal carriages. There were no bunks or anything. So they push us one on the other, you know, laying on the floor. And pushed one on top of the other. A terrible thing.

Did the train move quickly?

No. The journey from Finstiren(ph) to Gorlitz could have been at the most a hundred miles. Or maybe 150 miles. It wasn't a long way. Because they had to let through first the important things. If it was going a quarter of an hour, then it was standing three hours or four hours, like this. They put us always aside because we were not important. And the lines were always engaged with important things. Military things and other things which were necessary for the front.

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I sometimes read stories about people coming to the trains full of Jews or people being transported and giving them water?

No, it was not allowed. It was not allowed. They are doing things that the civilian people should not be able to see. Because the camps were always surrounded with two fences. Electrified wire. And it was made in such a way that we could see the outside and the outside couldn't see us. But at that time when we came from the station. We have gone to a part of the town. And they made us do exercises. We had a cap. "Put on the cap". In the camp, after appell, they made us do exercises.

Take the hat off, put the hat on?

Yeh. And there were 5,000 or 3,000 or 10,000 people. He said that we didn't do it properly. Because when we take off the hat, you have to make - like this (slap). So he wants to hear one slap. From all the 10,000. And if it's no good. When he says "mitern up"(ph), then you have to touch it. When he says "mitern down", like this. So he wants to hear. And he could do that two hours. Just to make - down and down and down.

Were there any other things he used to make you do?

Exercises. I told you that you have to roll all around. Jumping like this. A chair. To hold a chair in the hand and put on a glass. To sit like this. And hold the chair. If you get up the glass falls down. So he straight away hit you.

So you were kneeling and holding a chair at shoulder length. And the glass is balanced on top of the chair?

Yeh. A bottle usually.

And if you moved ..?

Yeh, he knows exactly.

And then what happened?

Then they ask you to jump like this. Terrible things. Then you used to crawl on the floor. These type of things they used to do. When we came to Gorlitz they took us to a part of the town. And the people have seen us. They are thinking that we are criminal people or whatever we are. They have seen how our hair is cut. The hair was cut short. Then they brought us to the camp. The camp was a few barracks. A small camp. And there were Jews, Polish Jews and Hungarian Jews. They haven't given us to eat at all. And the first thing was they made an appell. You know, assembled us. And the next day - there was a factory called Vagordenmaschinenbau. Vomark(ph) in short. The meisters from this factory came to the camp. And they have selected for themselves people to work inside. This was the first time where we started to work inside. So there was an outcry that we are hungry. So then they said that they can't - they were not prepared to give us to eat. They didn't have any. They were not prepared for that. There was a bathroom, a communal bathroom. And we

have gone naked into the bathroom. We took out all the things what we had. They didn't have really a shower or anything. They had a shlau(ph). A rubber shlau(ph). And they washed us like this, like you wash a car.

Like a hosepipe?

A hosepipe, yes.

And the water was cold?

Then naked they took us around in the camp. This was called entlousenk(ph). To take out the lice. At 2 o'clock in the night - every day at 2 o'clock in the night. They took us to a place where there was a lot of things to put on. And everybody could take what he wants. Also underwear. There was a shirt.

Where did the clothes come from?

From the factory.

So you were quite well clothed?

Then they give us black coffee. It wasn't really coffee you know. It was chicory. And a piece of bread. And they took us to the factory. And the meisters have located us to the work they need. My meister was Mr Miller. In the middle of the day they brought from the factory a soup to the factory. Between 12 and 1. Everybody got a bit of soup. Which was also called spinach, which I mentioned before. And there were people who for 4 days they didn't have much to eat.

What sort of work were you doing there?

And I was working on a machine. And I used to make holes. I used to drill holes for tanks.

You were making tank armour?

Parts. All armour, yes. It took an hour to go from the factory to the camp. And when we came back from the factory the lageraltester were waiting with his stick to smack. And the whole time he was moving on somebody to smack somebody, whoever it was. This was his task.

What kind of treatment did you get in the factory?

Working hard. Twelve hours. One week from 6 to 6. One week day and one week night. Including Sunday.

You were working with civilians?

There were all types of people there. It was a big factory for tanks.

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What kind of reaction did they have to you?

Nothing. You didn't have anything to do with them. And when we came home - when we came from the work, from the factory to the camp, every day was a revisia(ph). You know, they looked to see that you didn't take anything from the factory. In the beginning the meisters were more kind to us. Some of them have given a piece of bread to a Jew. But after a time they realised that we are Jews. Then they started to be very awkward to us. They used to give us wooden shoes, you know, Hollandikes(ph) they called it. Which we came without anything on the foot. In the beginning in the factory was also nice bathrooms. And they allowed us to have a shower or a bath. But after a time they realised that we are Jews, they didn't let us do that. In the beginning we used to get 33 deka(ph) of bread. Because the others who worked in the factory, the other nations, they used to get it. Afterwards they realised that we are Jews, they reduced it to half. The lageraltester if somebody - the usual thing was like this; somebody started, you know, to get weak, he used to have diarrhoea. And the diarrhoea finished him off in a short while. So if somebody has complained that he has got diarrhoea, so the lageraltester said "this is because you get this 18 deka(ph) of bread". So he took away his bread and he took it for himself. So people were frightened to say that they have got diarrhoea, because he doesn't even give it to them.

F476, End of Side A

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F476 Side B

If somebody was a good worker in the factory. He has done more than the norm was, the factory has given a premium of cigarettes. And these cigarettes we should have got in the camp. For the cigarettes you could get a piece of bread, anything. But this lageraltester took away the cigarettes for himself. If somebody didn't have a premium for work, he didn't want to give him soup also. Once he smacked me so that I couldn't - I couldn't talk at all. I didn't want to know who else is with me.

What for?

These people who have said that they are not well he throw them out. Every day the meister Miller, which was my meister, every day has given a list to the camp of the people who didn't work properly. And every night these people on the appellplatz have been maltreated and smacked and everything. Then came a transport of Jews from Lodz. 650 Jews. They looked not like human beings. Like skeletons. And these barracks were very poor. The roofs were leaking. And there was no heating. And there was no coats, you know, to cover yourself when you are sleeping on these straw sacks. And full with lice. You know the original underwear which they have given us was dirty. They didn't give us any to change. So the whole factory was full with lice. So they made in the factory an anti-lice campaign. They took us to the - these chemicals you know, to take out the lice. It didn't help.

What did they do, just dust you with powder?

I don't know. Water, hot water and everything. There were millions of - this was a terrible - you know this is even worse than hunger. Because it eats you up. And it grows in the skin. It's terrible. Now I tell you an interesting story. In this factory where I was working - this was a big factory. And I was working one week daytime and one week nighttime. From 6 till 6. And I was drilling holes in metal parts for tanks. And not far from me they used to make hinges for furniture. Nice hinges. And not far from my machine where I was drilling they found in the daytime - from the day shift. I was working there at that time in the night. They found some hinges. Furniture hinges, where they had drilled holes in the wrong place. Then meister Miller came to me. And he said to me "shut the machine". Because it was electric. I shut it. He took me down to the place where the kappo was. His name was Shpouter(ph). Herr Shpouter(ph). He came from the same town as I. And this was in the cellar. And he said that he found here these hinges which were wrong. Made the holes wrong. This is of course sabotage. Because if you make a thing wrong, you put it in a tank, the whole tank - or whatever it is. Where I was working they didn't make these hinges. In another place adjoining somewhere they make these hinges. And they are lately missing a lot of these. So they are stealing them. And not far from my machine were these hinges. So I must have had something to do with it. Either I drove the truck and I wanted to make sabotage, or I helped out other people to make sabotage, or to steal it. That I should disclose what is happening here. I don't know anything what it is and what happened. So he took me down to him and he told him the story and he showed it to him. That I am refusing to give information. And he asked him to see to it with force to get out the information which is necessary. So

they put me down on a bench. And one person held my hands and the other one the legs. And Mr Miller was standing next to him and he has given him a big stick. And he said he has to give me 20 - 20 times to smack me. He has done so. After these 20 I was laying already half dead. Then he said - he broke the stick, so he has given him a rubber one to smack me again. So he has smacked me and smacked me. And I was full with blood. And then he has seen that he hasn't achieved anything with it, so he ran away, Mr Miller. And I was laying in this cellar on the floor. So then this Hersel Shpouter(ph) from my town took me - he took me like this, you know.

By the collar?

And he just shlapped me up to the place where I used to work on the machine. And I was laying there next to the machine. Laying. Knocked down. Injured. With blood and everything. So between 12 and 1 everybody was going down to have this soup which they brought from the camp. And it was usually like this: everybody got a conserve can, an empty can. Because there were no plates. And with this conserve can he used to go in. When you go into the cellar you got - he has given you three quarters full of this soup. The soup on the top was thin. And at the bottom was thick. So everybody - when they took in a new kessel(ph), you know, a new - so everybody didn't want it, because they wanted it thick. A lot of people they always waited. And the SS usually used to go round saying "go, go, quick, quick down to have the soup". And when all had had the soup then they let them out because they shouldn't be able to take twice. So it was about a quarter to 1. There was one SS. I don't remember his name. And he has gone around. He has seen me laying. He said "go, go down, go for the soup". So he has seen me laying. Crying. And so then he said "what happened here". Because it was already at that time a regulation that you musn't smack the inhabitants of the camp in public. Because somehow they felt it's not very good. So then the other friend said that the kappo has smacked me hard. And this is what he has done the kappo. Then he said "call the kappo". So he sent one, two, three, four. Nobody - the kappo didn't come. Because everybody was frightened to go to say that the SS called him, you know, because he straight away would have been suspicious that he said something to the SS. So then he has seen that nobody comes back. He himself has gone down and he called up the kappo and he said to him "look what you have done here. Here are working all nationalities. And if this becomes public what has happened, what you have done, it is not allowed". In the meantime it was already past 1 o'clock, everything back to work. So he came up and he says "ah". He started again to kick me. He said that he hasn't done it. And I am only making more than it is. It is nothing. And then at that time Miller at quarter past 1 he used to go around straight away to see if everybody was on his machine. And he passed by my machine. And he came here. There was already standing around other nationalities looking what has happened here, you know. A Jew was killed. So Miller came also. He didn't know what it is. He has seen that I lay here on the floor. And I was crying. And the people in the SS asked what happened. So when Miller passed by, even though I was in such a state, I said - with a finger - I dared to say it. I said "he has done it. He asked to do that". You know he got red like a beetroot. And he has given me a kick with his leg. And he said "SPOKEN IN GERMAN". And they took me away straight away to the cellar. And I was laying there. And he came down and he was - he just kicked me. But he couldn't do anything. In the end - and I was laying there till half past 6, 7 o'clock, and I have gone back to the camp. I

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couldn't go anymore. So you know this soup used to come in containers. There was such a small carriage. Where they used to put on these containers. And the people - the Jews used to schlap it, to carry it. So they put me on this carriage. I couldn't go. But there were others also who couldn't go. So they put me on this - they schlap me. And we started to march out of the camp. And Miller came. And he stopped the main SS command. And he has given him a letter to the camp. It was about me. And then he was seeing that I am on this carriage. Then he has gone with his leg and he has given me a kick. He says "SPOKEN IN GERMAN". They shouldn't carry me like this. So soon we got away. They put me again to the carriage and they took me into the camp. In the camp was appell. And the SS counted up. And there were a few dead. And a few ill. And then I was laying, I couldn't stand up. So they count up the dead, they count up the half dead. Then soon as appell is over they came - the blockaltester from block number 1 called Shallitt(ph). I remember that. Twenty five four hundred and forty. This was my number. They said "here he lays". He said "you know what is happening. You know what an accusation there is here from the camp, from the administration, from the factory, from the administration. You are finished", he said to me. They took me there. Block number 1. And I was laying. Then the blind man. The lageraltester. Came in with a pycher(ph). And he used to say like that. He looked at me. "SPOKEN IN GERMAN". "Is it possible that you have done that". "SPOKEN IN GERMAN". He used to talk like that. "SPOKEN IN GERMAN". "What have you done". He said the SS has given to him the letter what came from the administration of the factory. They read out the letter. The letter says like this: That I am a very non-civilant. You know, a person who just pretends. Nobody has done anything to me. But I like to play up things. And I am involved first of all in a sabotage action. Because these hinges are wrongly bored. Secondly, and there is a lot missing. And he knows that I am not stealing it because I can't do anything with this. But I am helping people who have got something to do with it. And I am helping them. And they are stealing it and there is missing a lot. And the second, this is nothing. The third is that I have - the German prestige I have damaged in the eyes of other nations. Because I was accusing that they have done all this. Such an accusation. This was written to the administration of the camp to the chief SS. And this Czech reads it out and he says to me "look, for each of these is death. But what I am going to do with you, you are in any case ninety nine percent dead. So if I am putting you here to the cellar you will take a few days to die. Why should you suffer. Tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock we'll take you to Gross-Rosen, which is the main camp. And there is already a gallow for you. And the people will know, they will be told what has happened to you because you have done that. And you will be burnt and finished". Then he was talking with them to finish. Then all of a sudden he looked down at me. He said to me - he started to shout at me. "What, are you mad. You are going to get fifty knocks". I don't know what you call it.

Strokes?

Strokes. "And afterwards you have to go to work and say that for the punishment you got fifty strokes here. And the whole thing that you regret it and you go to work tomorrow morning. And I will give you a pair of Hollandikis(ph), you know, wooden shoes, a piece of bread and a soup. And go tomorrow to work. And say that you - that you wont do it anymore". Then they lay me down again. And one held my head, one held the legs. They are going to give me fifty strokes. There were special kappos

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to smack. None of them wanted to smack me, because they have seen they are going to finish me. Nobody wanted to do it. So nobody smacked me. Then he said "I am going to smack you". He is going to give me the fifty strokes. He put up the stick, "ho". He didn't even touch me. Just to pretend. It's unbelievable.

Why did he do that?

And the next day I have gone to work. I never work. I was laying for weeks in the cellar. They didn't know they brought me there. I was laying. And then go home. And they had written a letter to Miller what a punishment I got. And nobody - left me laying. And it was a few weeks. It's unbelievable.

So did you have broken bones?

I have got still here one bone on the left hand side which if you touch it is - All the blockaltester and all the polici from the camp they used to smack the people. Was called Tenenbaum(ph), from Yesheshoof(ph), from Rysher(ph). This Tenenbaum(ph) which I mentioned here. They got him somewhere in Los Angeles. And he was a naturalised American. They took away his nationality. They put him in prison.

Who was Tenenbaum(ph)?

He was the lagerkappo. This is the person who if somebody has to be punished he was the man he was smacking him. (Laughs).

He had no reason to do this to you?

Unbelievable. And I said to Miller that the smacks that I got in the factory were nothing in comparison what I got in the camp. It's unbelievable that this man - you know they got him after the war. They brought him to Lodz. Because there was, as I mentioned before, 650 Jews from Lodz. And a lot of them he - he killed with his cruelty. So I don't know what happened to him. A lot of people have gone to his trial. There was a trial for him in Poland. And Miller avoided me all the time. After 6 weeks - I was laying on my tummy because I was smacked - I started to get a bit better. And I started to go. And then I started to work, to come to the machine. Then Miller came back to me again. And he said to me "now, after all this, tell the truth. Tell us what happened. Who was involved". I said to him "what I had from all this. And I told you, I don't know anything. If you cut off my arm you wont get more information, because I don't know". I did dare to say it to a German. End of January '44 they brought a transport of Jews from Auschwitz. These people walked. They came walking from Auschwitz. They didn't have shoes. They didn't have anything to eat. And they were one night in our camp.

Did you have any contact with them?

No. I only heard about it. In the camp you couldn't go around. You know every movement was controlled. In February '45 there came a big lorry with documents from Auschwitz to our camp. I don't know how I know that. At that time this hundred people which were a bit weak like I. They used to call it muselmena(ph).

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You know, you become a muselmen(ph). They took us on a lorry. They took us to a place in Zittau. And to a factory where they used to make aeroplanes. There was in the same place a different camp for Jewish girls from Hungary. And 200 Jews which came from Auschwitz. This was on the 12th February '45. From this day onwards I was ill. I had diphtheria. And there was one room which they used to call dufufstasion(ph). Difou(ph) has got two meanings. Everything that you eat goes out. It's called sironka(ph). And in this room were about 8 to 10 people. But during the week they changed. They brought new ones. Every day in the morning, every day died two or three in this room. Every day in the morning there was a lageraltester. A shtubelster(ph). You know, they are in charge. This was a Russian. And he used to take twelve deka(ph) of bread a day for these people. In the end they didn't even give it every day, only the second day. And the SS used to come to the door to the room. He didn't dare to go in. Because this was contagious you know. And he used to ask him "how many shtinkjuden(ph) have you got". And he used to count them up. And he said how many there were. And how many dead. And once the SS came to the door - the same SS - and he recognised that I am still - We were laying on the floor, on straw. And it was dirty, you know, because - I was laying and he recognised me and he said "SPOKEN IN GERMAN". "This pig is still alive. How is this possible".

And there was no medical care. There was no doctor?

There was a doctor somewhere. But he couldn't do anything. At that time there was a person called Johnny Glicksman. He was a well known artist. And his name was Johhn Glicksman. He was a stage player. And he got typhoid. And the doctors didn't want to tell it to the Germans because the Germans if they were to know, not only they would have shot him, they would have shot everybody, because they were frightened it would spread.

Typhoid?

Typhoid. So what they done, they put him in this room. Where people were only going to die. And they brought him somehow to eat a little bit of soup and a little bit of bread. He didn't eat. So I have eaten it. It's unbelievable. I mean it's unbelievable. And this was a help for me because I had enough to eat. And he has survived this. According to my memory he has survived.

F476 End of Side B

F477 Side A

Every Sunday they used to take out the people in the open, naked. And even if it was frosty, they put water on them to take off the lice.

Including you?

No, no, no, the others. To take off the lice. On the reverse there was an SS called SDG. I don't remember who it is. Called SDG. He was a terrible sadist. He once has hit Dr Pyzanski(ph) from Sosnowiece. There was a doctor. Dr Pyzanski(ph). Because he let an ill person have socks on.

What else did he do?

Nobody who knew me could believe that I will survive, because I was so poorly at that time. My hands were full with infections. I have got here still - My legs. Everywhere. I was a skeleton. I weighed about sixty pounds.

You must have given up all hope of living?

I myself once said - I mean I was freed on Thursday. On the Saturday before I felt that I am finished. And I asked all the people around if somebody will - We didn't know that the war comes to an end. But I couldn't see that I will be able to get through this. Because I was so weak. And I asked if somebody will survive he should let know my family, whoever it will be, what happened with me.

Tell me, did you feel then, when you were that ill, did you feel in any way forsaken by God?

No. No. I have never given up my hopes. Never.

In fact another question. Did you manage to keep up any religious observance?

I didn't have anything anymore. I did know to pray by heart. And if I could I do it. But I was so weak. On the 5th of May the Germans started to leave the camp. This was four days before. And these people who could walk could go out from the camp. But I couldn't walk. And then they told us that we are free. So I couldn't go. There was a person, Rossmarine(ph). He was also there in the same room. And he somehow got up from the floor. And held himself on the walls. And he walked out. He walked out from the room. A few hours later he came back. Nice cut to the hair. Dressed. Washed. Dressed in a suit. The suit was hanging on him. And he had a big plate with noodles. Cooked up. And he brought it. The rest of us were laying there asking him "why do you have that". He said "I went out from the camp. I hardly can walk. And a German woman came to me. And she said to me will you leave us alive. So I said I will leave you alive. I have got no strength to move". She took him to her house. And she made him a bath. She cut his hair. And she took out from her cupboard underwear and a suit. And she has given him to eat how much he wants. Then he couldn't eat anymore. So he said "I have got friends who haven't got

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anything to eat, they haven't eaten". So she took a big plate - not a plate to eat - a washing up bowl. And she cooked it full with noodles. With lockshen(ph). And he brought it. And in this minute he said this, he got mad for pleasure and he throw it like a madman.

So there was lockshen(ph) everywhere?

Yeh, but this was no problem. On the 9th of May 1945 the first Red Army patrol came to the camp. When we have seen them we started to cry. From this first patrol from the Red Army was a Jew from Kiev called Captain Vasser(ph). A young nice man. And he started to take an interest in us. On the 10th of May they took us on a lorry to the shtat hospital(ph) in Sitow(ph). To the hospital in the town. And there was no room in the hospital. And we were laying - the first time the sun was shining on us, it was a nice day - on the grass. Laying on the grass. And the Red Army brought in people from the streets to work. So the Germans usually in the hospitals on the top floor, this was empty, because they were frightened for air-raids. In the hospitals they didn't use the top floor. But now the war was over they took people from the streets, Germans, whoever came. And they took them to gather mattresses and beds to the top floor in order to allocate us. And always when they brought a few Germans and they show them "look, the people, what you have done with these people". The Germans made such a face. "This is not possible. Who has done this". Everybody. In the beginning we started to believe. But we have seen they all made the same gesture, so it was only a gesture. And I was laying in the hospital on the top floor. It took a few months till I could go down from this - There wasn't a bed, there was on the floor mattresses. But afterwards they put us in a bed.

How did they treat you?

There wasn't much to eat there. There was a doctor. I can't remember his name. A German. He wasn't bad.

What did you feel when you saw the Red Army in the camp?

We were crying. And I was ill. They didn't believe for a month that I would get out of it. But slowly I started to. I haven't have to dress or anything. And I had a cousin in the hospital. My father's cousin he was. He was also ill, but he recuperated quicker than I. And he has gone. There was no post. There was no connection with the outside world. Nothing. We didn't have much to eat in the hospital either. Very little. And the German nurses were looking after us. I wouldn't complain. German doctors. And they make me X-rays and I had trouble with the lungs. And slowly I started to recuperate. And there was a terrible drugging for hunger. The people were psychologically hungry. And a lot of people died because they have overeaten. I myself remember even in the first year, in the middle of the night I used to get up and eat. Eat, eat, eat, eat. It was a psychological hunger.

Because eating too much when you haven't eaten can kill you?

Yeh. So there was a lot of people dying afterwards. I mean I didn't have the strength to go out to see. Because other people who were healthy, they had some satisfaction

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you know, to hit Germans or whatever it was. I never. I was ill. And I was believing still that my parents are alive. Even what I have seen and I have gone through, I've deluded myself. My father's cousin he wanted to go back to Poland to see what's happening. And to find his family or whatever. So I asked him to go and find my parents that they should take me out of here, because I am cut off from the world, I have got nothing here. And I didn't have any papers. So I asked the hospital to give him a letter that I have been here delivered from the concentration camps. And I am laying here. And somebody should come and take me out from here. Every morning I asked the nurse if anybody has come. I can't forgive myself after today how wishful thinking can delude a person. In October I started already to walk a bit and to feel a bit better. I had gone with a stick. I didn't have anything to dress. I didn't have anything. I mean I didn't have - I was laying in the hospital pyjamas or whatever it was. Then I have gone to the burgermeister, you know, to the administration for the town. And I told him that I am from the camp. And I want to have shoes or something. Because I want to go back to Poland. So they somehow have given me a paper to get a pair of trousers and a shirt, which was a pepitter(ph) shirt. I used to have it still up till now. And it was very poor quality. The shoes were secondhand shoes. And I decided one day in October that I am going home. And I asked the doctor for a history of my illness. Because I am not still healthy. So they wanted to get rid of me also. It wasn't for me also to stay there. No Jews, no nothing. So I started. The hospital has given me some medicines. They have given me a history of the illness. And they have given me bread. And I went down to the station in Sitow(ph) to go home. There were really no trains. Because Poland has moved the borders till Gorlitz. Gorlitz was the order. The nicer. So Sitow(ph) wasn't far from the border. So I got a train to Gorlitz.

Did you have money for a ticket?

No. I just got on the train. I said "I haven't got any money. I am from the camp". They didn't say anything. I came to Gorlitz. There is a border to Poland. You can't go to Poland. So then they told me that if I want to go to Poland I have to go to Koblenz. And there are going military transports to Poland with the Russians. And from there I can go to Poland. So I took a train again to Koblenz. I arrived at Koblenz. As soon as I went out from the train the Russians came with rifles. "Halt. Who are you". So I said "I am from the camp". And I had from this Vasser(ph) who I mentioned, this Captain Vasser(ph), he came to the hospital, from time to time he brought us to eat. And he has given everybody from the hospital, and the Jews, a watch which they took away. He was in charge of a prisoner of war camp. He took away from the Germans and he gave them to us. Just a watch. They have given me the watch. A pocket watch which was most probably worth £2. Everything was something. I didn't have anything. And I had bread. And I had also a cushion because I was ill. And I had a stick. Soon I got out. He says he wants to see if I haven't got any guns or anything. And I said "alright". He looked. He found the watch. Take away the watch. Take the bread away from me. The Russian soldier took away the bread from me and the watch. And I was very heartbroken at that time. Because they are supposed to be our protectors. And the way they treated me - it's unbelievable. So I was naive of course. I have gone to the Russian commandant. And I couldn't speak Russian, but Polish you somehow - And I told him what happened. Then he said "wait a minute, let's call all these people". So he called in a

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number of soldiers who were at the station. I should recognise which one it was. So I recognised. I said "he took away the bread, he took away a watch from me". And do you know what he has done? He's gone to me and he slapped me on the face. The Russian. He said that I am a liar. That I am a liar. And somehow the commandant called him in afterwards and he brought me back the watch. But the bread not. The bread - he had a German girl - I don't know what - He has given in front of me the bread to the German girl. Would you believe it? So - couldn't do anything. I had to stomach this also, because I stomached much more than that. And I was laying there. Then there were trains. It wasn't a real station, only trains coming from the east. The Russians have plundered out Germany. They tore down furniture, everything they loaded on. Everything was for them, the whole business. Couldn't believe it. And you had whole trains with these things which were not worth anything to take away. And these trains were going to Russia. There was a lot of trains. And there was a commandant. A Russian commandant in a carriage. So I have gone to him. He straight away started again with me. If I haven't got any rifles or things like that. He found again this watch which the first one had given me back. And he took it away from me. He took it again away from me. And he said that he would let me go home. And he put me on a train. This was not a train for people. Again this was full with materials. And he put me on the top of the train. And he says "here with your cushion you sleep here and the train will go". I was the whole night in the open. And in the morning - in the middle of the night the Russian soldiers used to go to see with a lamp who it is there. So he said "yes, this is a man who wants to go home from the camp". He left me there. In the morning I have seen that the train doesn't go. I have gone down. And I asked the commandant who took away the watch from me, I said "when will the train go". He doesn't know, it depends when they will give an okay to go. So I said "how long is this train already staying here". He says "a week". (Laughs). So then I could see that no chance. So what I have done, I took my way back to Gornitz, to the station. Because it is no use. And I was hungry. The bread I didn't have. I didn't have again anything. So I found a German hotel. It wasn't a real hotel, it was an inn, you know. And I've gone in there. The German took me in, very nice, he made me to eat something. He didn't have a lot. Porridge. I don't know, something like that. And a warm drink. He made me to sleep. And I was sleeping. In the middle of the night the Russians used to come there to this inn. And they were drinking with German girls. It was terrible. You know you would think this was a - The Russians used to bring bread. They used to bring a flask with vodka, you know. And everybody tore a piece off the bread and eating. And the vodka. Wild people. Unbelievable. Unbelievable. So I was very, very, very depressed. After all this. And seeing what is going on further. It depressed me terrible. I couldn't take it. So I was there a few days till I recuperated a little bit. Because all this was terrible for me. I mean to go through this. Now it will be different and - So I have gone back to Gornitz. And when I came back to Gornitz they told me that the Russians every day go into the street and whoever they find they take them to work. They can send them to Russia also. I shouldn't go. There was a Polish delegation. And I have gone to them. I said "I want to go back". So they said - they were also frightened of the Russians. So once a day, or once in two days, they used to have a lorry to take - because trains were not going normal. They used to take the people over to Poland, through the border. They used to give them a ticket wherever you wanted to go. So they took me a few days - they took me on the lorry, they took me over to Poland. They have given me a ticket to Krakow. I arrived in Krakow. I didn't have anywhere to go again. A

few Jews from the camps, poor like the night. All the Jewish houses, all the Jewish shops and everything belongs now to the goyen(ph). And if you go back to the place they can kill you. Every day they used to kill people in Poland. The Russians didn't kill, the Russians robbed them, whatever they could get off you they took. The Poles, they just killed the Jews. So I have gone back to my town. Come back to my town. A town in which 12,000 Jews were living. And go around the streets and no Jew, no nothing. The house in which I used to live, goyen(ph) are living there, not Jews. If you go there he can kill me, because he was frightened that I am going to take it back from him. So the neighbour - he wasn't directly a neighbour, but not far from us, was a Christian called Shabuter(ph). And he recognised me. And he asked me, the first thing he asked me, "are you still alive. How is that". (Laughs). I was broken like anything. Seeing there is nobody. Then I was going around in the street. I met a man called Hollander(ph). He recognised me and I recognised him. And he told me that he got married to Svilina Poofalis(ph). There was a rich man in Chrzanow. He had the biggest block of flats. And his daughter, after the war they got married. It was six months after the war. And they are living here. Not in their house. They just rented a room. They are living in this room. So he took me to his room. And he has given me to eat something whatever he had. He didn't have a lot. And it has come to the night. He says "I haven't got a bed for you. But what I can give you I have got a cot". I was sleeping in the cot. In the morning I got up. He has given me again some breakfast. And I've gone out in the street. I've met another person. And he said to me "you know I am just coming from Krakow. And in Krakow your mother's brother is alive. He lives in Krakow". So it was something for me. But I've forgotten to tell you. When I was in Gorlitz waiting for the train to go to Poland, I was on the station in Gorlitz. Then a train came and came down people. And I recognised a person with whom I was in Markstadt. It was such a relief and I was so happy. And his name was Yiedfrid Benskovski(ph). And you know what he told me? "I am just now coming from Ravensbourg(ph). From the American zone. And I have seen your brother and your sister".

You must have felt very happy?

Ahh. I couldn't believe it. But no contact, no post, no nothing. So I have gone to Krakow to find my uncle. I found him. It was this uncle what I mentioned. My mother's brother.

How did you find him?

Well, there was a Jewish committee on the Litzaduga 38. A committee for the Joint. And there was a centre where the Jews used to come together. And I have gone there. And they did know who came and who didn't. So they somehow have given me his address. I don't remember exactly. But he was in Krakow. He had a block of flats, about a hundred tenants and he didn't have anywhere to live. So he rented a room in Podgoosh(ph). This is on the other side of the Vishla(ph). You know Krakow, the water, the Vishla(ph) cuts through the other side. And this was Kulveriska 21(ph), on the third floor, he had a room there. So I went up. And all of a sudden he came down. And he recognised me. It was a big thing for him and for me. I was not well at all. I hardly could walk. So I have gone to this Relitsabluga 38(ph). And there was a Dr Laif(ph). A Jewish doctor. He was together in the camp with my uncle in

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Brinis(ph). This has got to do with this Schindler story. And they had a type of - it wasn't a hospital. A .....? And I was laying there. And this Dr Laif(ph) has taken care of me. And I was laying there for quite a few months. And every day my uncle and my auntie used to come to the place and brought me to eat. Two old people. And I didn't have still anything to dress in. So the first suit my uncle bought me with his money. This old man. He bought me the material. And he has gone to a tailor. When I was a bit better. But still I wasn't well. I was laying there six months.

You were still running a fever?

So then they said I have to go to a sanitorium in Lower Selesia(ph). Called Galleniagoorer(ph). And belonging to the Joint. No, this wasn't belonging to the Joint, this was belonging to - for the government. And I have gone there and I was there a year. Then to Adsvoska(ph), I have gone there in '47. I was about two years still not well. And I was in Advosk(ph) a time. And then I found in Krakow, later came back my father's youngest brother from Russia. He came back with his family. With one son. And he was also with nothing in the end. Then he started off he wanted to take back the factory from - the timber sawmill - from the government. It was ruined. Worn out all the machines. The Germans took out the last of it. So he got it back. He couldn't run it. And I was still in the hospital. So he came to me to the hospital the first time. When I was in Leniagoorer(ph). And he brought me 10,000 slottis. With this I bought myself the first pair of shoes. I didn't have shoes. And he begged me to come back and that I can get back this factory. A small factory now because everything was ruined. And I should help him. So I got better and I came back. And it was a whole struggle also to run the business, because the government was so hostile. And there is a lot to tell you how they made it. You know my uncle had this big tenament block. He got it back. So he appointed an estate agent to administrate it. It was a Dr Horwitz(ph). He was a solicitor. And he told me always my uncle he is frightened to go to account for it because he will ask him to pay to it.

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

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Ref. No.: C410/083

Playback Nos: F470-479 inclusive

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Collection Title: Living Memory of the Jewish Community

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Interviewee's surname: Reifer

Title: Mr

Interviewee's forenames: Shmuel (Samuel)

Date of Birth: 15/11/1920

Sex: Male

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY CONTINUATION

Shmuel (Samuel)ReiferRef. No. F470-479 inc/Page62

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### F470 Side A

Born in Chrzanow, between Cracow and Katowice, Poland, in 1920. In 1939 it was about 40 miles from the German border. Near the village of Matchkie - village on the corner of Russia/Austrian empire/Germany pre-1914.

Chrzanow is 200 years old, Reifer's family were one of the earliest Jewish settlers. Great great grandfather - Elookhim Ghetzel Reifer, a farmer and timber merchant. About 35,000 inhabitants, 12,000 Jews mainly in centre of town. Intenseley orthodox community - Shabbos, the entire town was closed. A district administrative centre and market town. Oswiecim was 13 miles away -- we never knew the extent of the horror there. In 1939 the Germans annexed it and called it Kranau.

The Jews traded with Germany a lot - more cultivated and businesslike people, unlike the poor Poles.

Family in the timber trade. Explanation of Polish rural economy and the system of local owners selling timber rights and ruling the area. Sapieha (at Bobrik) owned much of the local land. Potowski at Cheshowice. They had a lot of power including power of life and death. Main income was from fishing and timber rights; and great great grandfather was the main buyer of timber from the Fersten/Prism/Graften (titles).

Grandfather and father bought from Sapieha, Pototsky at Cheshowicz, and Stashefski in Koczkiwicz. Description of timber felling in the freezing winter, taken to station and then to the Reifer family sawmill. A lot of business was supplying wood for the Silesian coalmines.

Grandfather was a very religious person. He used to get up at 3 in the morning to go to the mikveh. The sawmill was in Chelmek - two stops (Liblianch coalmine), then Chelmek on the train. In Chrzanow grandfather had a timber warehouse.

Every winter grandfather used to take to him a grandchild to teach him how to behave. He built his own Beth Hamidrash next to the timber yard. After the mikveh he said tehillin until 4.30ish. Shmuel had to say it with him and he told him off - "You're four and a half already and you can't daven yet". Then friends came and they learned Talmud until 7.30. Then daven maariv until 9 a.m. Then home. The house was two houses - at No. 18 and 18a Kochtileska Street, with timber yard behind them. Then he started work till 3, when he had another shiur. Shmuel used to love being with him. Used to attend cheder nearby. Grandmother was Rachow Heigli, an invalid with diabetes. They had eight children. Grandfather was a Hassid and a well known man in the town.

Discussion of Hassidism follows.

### F470 Side B

Great grandfather used to go to the Rebbe Tfera Shleva, at Radomsk, who died 134 years ago.

Polish anti-semitism and the explanation. The Poles used to call you Zhid - Zhid Ypauchro - Jewish Rash. And hit you. When Hitler came to power in Germany it got worse in Poland, and the local anti-semites - the Andiks - became more active. For example, boycotts and picketing of Jewish shops.

The family sawmill at Chelmek had a wall facing the rail line - the Andiks painted on the fence "This is a Jewish Sawmill, do not buy from the Jews".

Shmuel had Peyyos and was recognisable as a Jew. He went to Cracow in 1935-36 to visit a Rabbi in a clinic in the university area; and the students hit him. Another time, on holiday in Alvernia (in the mountains), rail station was Regolicze. Walking in the wood, they were beaten up by a group of young priests (monks?) staying in a local monastery. Went to the police station to report it. They just laughed at their Peyyot. Violence was part of their lives. Poles were basically anti-semitic and the Jews expected to suffer. The Germans were far more tolerant and more cultivated. Education: He was brought up in the Yeshivas. Barmitzvah was such a big celebration.

Was oldest son. His father took over the business in the 30s. Had a sister (now in Israel), a brother Moishe Dov, who never came back from the camps, and a fourth brother (now in the USA). He was a little boy then, who saved his life.

Went to Yeshiva in the town. Two hours a day private secular education as well - maths, Polish, history. There was no Jewish school in Czranow. Had very little contact with non-Jews.

His father negotiated a big deal between Sapielha and Jan Bata, the Czech shoe manufacturer, to build a big factory there. Sapielha bought some land in the Belgian Congo with the money. After the war the Communists took everything from Sapielha, and he went to live in the Congo. He used to send family tea from his plantation. He spoke very highly of Shmuel's father and grandfather. In a way, then, he was a friend. Shmuel was brought up in a flat. Until about 1935 there was no running water. They used to go to the well. And they kept warm with a coal fired stove. Things were simpler and more "real", and people were happier.

#### F471 Side A

They used to bathe at the mikva, where there was hot water, a steam bath. There were many synagogues, of various sizes -- up to 1500 people. There were 200 in his shtiebel. The Rabbi was a rich man, he took no salary and funded many yeshivas.

A typical day in the Yeshiva described.

He never read a newspaper in those days. His father used to read the Jewish Tumbblatt - a Yiddish daily. But they had a small circle of life and narrow horizons.

In Cracow Jews were more assimilated - active Zionists etc, and professionals.

Orthodox Jews were not professionals - but tradesmen. The entire Polish economy was basically run by Jews.

In 1938-39 there was tremendous tension. But there was wishful thinking -- they used to fool themselves that they would be OK.

Reminiscences:

1. Reb Jankele - his teacher between 10 and 15 years of age. A very pious man; "a great man".
2. A poor shoemaker, and how he used to live.
3. Reb Yitzhak Alder Korngold, another of his teachers and a very learned man -- a currency dealer by trade.

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Chrsanow, 30th May 1942: Round-up of 3,000 Jews for deportation to Auschwitz. First they kept them in a school for three days. Two hundred in a room. Reb Jankele was deported then, and said "I will go to my father" (in heaven). Such people are not made any more.

Was very studious; always top of the class, and an ambitious student. Wanted to be a businessman, to have his independence so that he could study. Loved books and used to read them constantly.

Diet. A meagre diet. Never drank or smoked. They used to say he was a young man with an old head.

Festivals. A very close family. His mother Rivka - her beauty, sweet temper and dedication to the children. Festivals were celebrated simply.

### F471 Side B

Anti-semitism and the rise of Hitler. Pogroms started in the mid-1930s: Bilicz, Lwow, Lodz, Chela.

Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Danzig crisis.

The day war broke out. In the build-up to war: The Polish appeal for funds for aircraft.

The Germans came to Chrszanow on the Monday after war broke out.

Jewish reaction to Kristallnacht. Expulsion of Polish Jews from Germany. Poland did not take them back - they were stuck at Zbunchin on the border. They collected money for them. There was a Jewish outcry but not a world outcry.

Munich agreement: Chamberlain sold out.

How history repeats itself.

Jewish impotence in the face of the oppression.

Discussion of the 1917 Balfour declaration.

The day war broke out: depression. No one knew what was going to happen.

Mobilisation. The orthodox Jews avoided conscription, because of the anti-semitism in the army.

The day the Germans arrived, they collected all the Jews and assembled them in the synagogues. They beat them up and looted the valuables. Was hiding in a cellar with his father.

That same day the Germans massacred 132 Jews in a sports stadium between Chrzanow and Tshiblina, eight miles away. They left them there. There was one survivor of this action. Simcha Steinberg; lived in Antwerp after the war. They then made the Jews bury them in a deep pit. A few months later they were reburied in Chrszanow - under auspices of police chief Shindler and the German administrator Lilterlung. A butcher, Usha Friedman, got in with Lilterlung by bribing them with coffee and gemstones, and organised the reburial. They now lie in the Jewish cemetery in Chrszanow.

### F472 Side A

More about the first day of the war. German round-up and search of Jews.

Taking of ten hostages on Yom Kippur 1939, under SS Obersturmbannfuhrer Major Linde (also responsible for massacre of Jewish POWs in Bialy-Podolski). After a

thorough search he imposes the death penalty for food hoarders in the ghetto. A hostage called Victor Klagsbald was killed. His grandfather was another hostage, freed from prison by his father. Weber was in charge of the Judenrat - a corrupt and wicked man.

How the Jewish ghetto was created in Chrzanow; how German immigrants came. Forced labour and terrible conditions. The Jews of Oswiecim were all deported to Chrzanow. Rumour of Himmler's visit to Auschwitz and its renaming "Himmlerstadt". They knew it was a concentration camp. Description of Oswiecim before the war. Description of what happened in the camp.

#### F472 Side B

How the Germans took over his father's sawmill. He was partly cushioned by contacts with the outside world. Sapiuha, for example, sent food. How they made their own matzo for Passover. They had the farm and went to hide there for a time. So they managed for about the first year.

5th November 1940: Jews are moved to Sosnowiece labour camp (DULAK): General Schmiedel wanted them for forced labour. Dulak, or Durkangslger there, run by Major Linde. Description of Linde and his dogs. Helped by SS Sturmbannfuhrer Ludwig. At first Shmuel worked in the forest - a good job - through father's connections. Hard work, but they got out of the ghetto and could contact the outside world.

Religious life in the ghetto went on in private homes. Desecration of holy books: Torah used as drumskin, vegetables wrapped in page torn out of the Talmud. Harshness of daily life. Deportation of 800 Jews to Sakrau, and murder of 22 in Auschwitz. Conditions get worse.

May 1941. There was a general round up and 2,500 Jews were kept in the school. 675 people were in hiding; they took their wives hostage to try to winkle them out. The Germans demanded 50 marks from each person.

#### F473 Side A

Linde took out the 1200 who paid, beat them up and sent them back to the ghetto. The rest were put to work on a motorway. 500 were later sent to the east to work near Leningrad on the railway tracks to the front. Three months later, only 100 very sick people came back to Sosnowiece.

Description of Brande "recuperation" camp where invalids were sent; they used to kill them off with hot and cold showers.

They had two hiding places - in the attic and below the cellar.

On 19th February 1942, Gauleiter Wagner ordered all the Jews eliminated. They all hid underground when the round-up started. Then started to run out through the windows. The SS found his father and sister. Then they found him. He was unconscious. His sister saved both their lives. Some members of his family were rounded up and then killed in Auschwitz - they sent the ashes back.

Story of Laderer, a Jewish collaborator, and his mistress Mandelbaum.

#### F473 Side B

In a later action they took his mother hostage. His sister went in her stead. They sent his sister to Shaemberg camp.

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April 1942. German police rounded up all the Jews who had any criminal records. Dreher, the Gestapo chief based in Katowice, and police chief Schindler arrived. Jews ordered to build gallows at Swietokrzyskiej 36 ("Henkerplatz"), followed by public hanging of seven Jews.

30th May 1942. German police rounded up all the Jews in the Henkerplatz, followed by:

3rd June 1942. Moishe Merin sent 3,000 Jews from Chrszanow to Auschwitz. He pretended they had gone to Lodz.

8th July. Another round-up.

#### F474 Side A

This round-up included most of the people who had escaped the first one. People fooled themselves into thinking it was all over now and everything would be OK.

15th November 1942. Kripo rounded up 300 Jews, including Weber, their Jewish informer. Germans from Rumania moved into their flats.

More about informers, including Staner.

Shmuel's two hiding places.

20th February 1943. He was hiding in his grandfather's attic. The final round-up.

Three thousand Jews taken out and taken away in trains. He was trapped in his attic; in a more or less empty town.

How his unclude was better off being sent to a Russian POW camp, even though they didn't know it at the time. Russian treatment of Jewish refugees and description of life in Siberian labour camps.

Description of the German policeman Meier, and how he delighted in humiliating and punishing Jews.

How he got out of the hiding place and found other Jews who had hidden from the round-up, including his father and his brother. They decided to try to take the train to Schodolo - hopping on at Conte, a nearby village, in the dead of night. Got to Czakowa and then fled to Sosnowice ghetto, where conditions were truly appalling. His father bribed an SS officer with diamonds to get the three of them out to a farm where they worked as forced labourers in the programme of "Germanisation" of agriculture. Conditions were better and there was more to eat.

22nd August 1943. Linde came to the farm and the SS rounded up the Jews; he was liquidating the small labour camps. They were taken to Bautrop Nord Klobutsk camp, and were kept there 8 days, with a few hundred other people. They were then loaded into trains.

#### F474 Side B BLANK

#### F475 Side A

How 150 Jews were tempted out of their hiding places in Chrzanow by the Gestapo. The transport took them - 330 Jews - to Blechhammer - the IG Farben plant used slave labour there. They were kept there 8 days. There was an assassination attempt on Hitler at this time; the Italian guards there were pleased because they thought he was dead.

Hausschild, the SS chief there, selected the young people for transport for labour; the rest were to be sent to Auschwitz, but the Jewish Lageraltester stopped this. The children were kept behind, but later sent by Hausschild to Auschwitz. The men were then taken to Graeditz - an old flour mill and a terrible camp; the women were sent to the Sudetenland to work in the German cotton industry.

Conditions at Graeditz, run by Kiske. Work building barracks at Langbilau. An attempted escape. A transport of French and Dutch Jews arrived and died very quickly. Two Dutch Jews escaped and were later captured. They were woken up to watch the hanging.

Food in the camps.

After a while he was sent to Reichenbach where he worked levelling land for the railways.

#### F475 Side B

Very hard work and many people died. Was badly injured but survived.

The inmates of Graeditz were all sent to Faulbrueeck camp. Another terrible camp, run by Czaja.

12th November 1943. 150 Jews sent to Markstadt - where they built the Krupp "Bertha-werke". This was a much better camp than Graeditz. Working on the gas pipeline to the factory. Terrible work for a sadistic master.

How his brother, who served the SS guards, saved his life by feeding him and his father with potatoes. But the camp Judenaltester made a complaint about this and they changed the guards who had grown soft.

25th March 1944. Brutal selection. 1,000 Jews, including his father, were left in Markstadt; the rest of them were sent to Funfteichen. Another, much bigger, Krupp camp. Conditions in the camp. Twenty people a day died from the work.

#### F476 Side A

Soon there was a shortage of forced labour and conditions for them improved a little. They were treated a little better. More on camp conditions. The camp was a satellite of Gross-Rosen and 70 people a week were sent there for extermination. He worked for a firm called Gebel.

July 1944. The attempt on Hitler's life. After the Warsaw rising a lot of Poles arrived; much stronger than the older inmates. They selected 403 Jews for Gorkitz camp.

They were transported there - three days in sealed carriages, barefoot. Sadistic exercises in the camp. Conditions in the camp. Work in the arms factory. Conditions in the factory got worse once they realised they were Jews - rations halved, etc.

#### F476 Side B

More on conditions. The factory was full of lice. Lice is worse than hunger.

Then the boss, Herr Miller, had him beaten until he was nearly dead for a theft he did not commit. This was sabotage for them. The kapo took him back to his machine.

He just lay there. An SS man found him; he was furious that Shmuel had been taken up again and so other workers in the factory had found out about the beating. He couldn't walk; they took him back to the camp on a trolley.

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Back in the camp. He was told these crimes merited death. Was 99 percent dead anyway. He sentenced Shmuel to hang on the gallows at Gross Rosen tomorrow. Then he commuted the punishment to fifty strokes. They held him down for the strokes. But he only pretended to hit him. So he escaped. He went back to the factory. Couldn't work. Just laid by the machine for six weeks. January 1945. Jews arrived at Funfteichen, after walking from Auschwitz. They only stayed one night. In February 1945 a lorryload of documents from Auschwitz arrived too.

12th February 1945. Was transferred to Zittau camp and became badly ill with diphtheria. Lay in the sick block. Johnny Glicksman, well known artist came down with typhoid. Ate his food rations because he couldn't.

#### F477 Side A

Weight came down to about sixty pounds. Thought he was going to die. On 5th May the Germans started to leave the camp. They were free. 9th May the Red Army arrived. Slowly started to get stronger and recuperated in hospital. Then made his way back to Poland. Russian soldiers stole from him and made difficulties on the way. Devastation in Poland. Got back to Chrzanow. No Jews there. How he got back together with his family. For two years he was still recovering.

#### F477 Side B BLANK

#### F478 Side A

Stayed in hostel for a while. The work of the "Bricha" movement in getting people out of Poland. Life in Poland in the post-war years. Pogroms. How he got out of Poland, using family connections. 9th February 1949. Left for Switzerland, for a sanatorium there. How he met his wife, and she brought him to London. Early days in London. Work as a bookbinder, then in the antique book trade. Difficulties integrating with the community in Stamford Hill. Difference between Hungarian and Polish Jewry.

#### F478 Side B

Personal philosophy of life. Reflections on the book trade and the importance of books to the Jews. How he was reunited with his brother and sister.

#### F479 Side A

Children born in 1952 and 1959. Attitude to Israel. Religious beliefs: Holocaust strengthened them. Attitude to reunification of Germany; mistrust of Germans. Belief that anti-semitism is unavoidable. Personal/political philosophy.

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