

NATIONAL

Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY**

MENDEL BEALE

Interviewed by Cathy Courtney

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F2911 Side A

.....first of all, where you were born and when.

I was born in a place called Sanpolno[ph] in Poland in 1921, December 24th.

And your parents, do you know where they were from?

Yes, my mother was born in the same town, and my father a place nearby, Izbitza Koyovska[ph]. My elder sister was born in Sanpolno[pn] and my younger sister in Izbitza[ph].

Ah, so the family had moved.

We moved when I was very young, only a baby, we moved from Sanpolno[ph] to Izbitza[ph].

Right, OK. Now first of all you could tell me something about, let's start with your father and your father's family, and his parents, what you know about them, if you have met them, what they...

My father had one sister. His own father died when he was very young, in fact I am named after him, and his mother, my grandmother Tsipaula[ph], she died quite a number of years before the war, but I remember her.

But you knew her.

Yes.

Do you know anything about your grandfather, what he did for a living when he was alive?

Not really, no, I don't remember that.

How old was your father when he died?

About 16.

But he never spoke much about his father?

No. I probably didn't ask.

No. Did your grandmother do anything for a living or...?

No. After my father, how he came to meet my mother in Sanpolno[ph], because he went there, to a family where he trained to be a watchmaker in Sanpolno[ph], and that's how he met my mother there.

And you say he had a sister.

Two sisters.

Two sisters?

One older, one younger.

Yes. And what happened to them?

Well the younger one died in the ghetto in Lodz, June the 4th 1944.

Had she married?

No.

She was a single...?

They were all single, yes. And my younger sister...

No, not yours, no, your father's; I'm talking about your father's family at the moment.

Oh yes, yes, she was married and she lived near Krazos, a nearby called Hodech[ph], and she had six children, six sons.

So your father did only have one sister?

One sister.

I thought you said that, yes, one sister. Right. And she had six children?

Yes.

What was your father's name, what was he...

Zelig[ph].

Zelig[ph]. And his sister?

Necha[ph].

Nacha[ph]? And who had she married?

Somebody by the name of Blumenfeld[ph].

And they lived...?

Hodech.

Right, so that's your father's family. Now coming on to your mother's family, and your mother's parents.

Her parents, I knew them, I still remember them very well. Her maiden name was Wienewotzwaska[ph], it's rather a long name.

I think you're going to have to write the names down for me later!

[INAUDIBLE] name. Her mother's name was Feidemariam[ph], and her father's was Leizer[ph].

How many were in that family?

There were two sisters and two brothers. The oldest were a brother, name was Josef Mendel. During the First World War he finished up in Russia, and he stayed there until, well until he died during the war. He lived in a place called Halkov[ph]. Her elder brother's name was Zelig[ph], he lived in Sanpolno[ph], and the youngest one was the sister named Goldscheiner[ph].

And where did she live?

Also Sanpolno[ph].

Yes, yes. So what brother in Sanpolno[ph] do?

The last I remember he was a [INAUDIBLE]. Perhaps because he could read and write, I don't know.

Now then your grandfather, your mother's father. What can you tell me about him? Do you know what he did for a living?

Yes, they went on the markets with bedding, if my memory is right. Yes, almost until the end, yes.

On the market, in the town?

No, around, nearby places.

Travelled around?

Yes.

With bedding.

Yes.

Did he have any kind of store or shop as well, or just...

No.

Just selling on the markets.

Just that, yes.

Do you remember where your grandparents lived?

Yes, I remember where they lived, but I don't remember the name of the street.

No, no.

But I remember, I remember very well where they lived.

Yes?

Yes, and they lived just off the square in the...it was only a small place, it was only a small place, and they lived just off the square. I used to go there every year in the summer holidays.

What, to stay with them?

Yes. I remember that.

Yes? What was it, was it sort of like a flat, an apartment, or was it a house?

No no no, it was...there was an apartment in a house, an apartment of two rooms. In those days a place like this was a big apartment. You had to be well off to live in two rooms, others only get one room.

Yes, yes. So where your grandparents comfortable?

Yes, yes, reasonably comfortable, for those days I would say they were reasonably comfortable, yes.

Did your grandfather have any position in the Jewish community?

Oh yes, yes yes. He was quite proud, he was the president of the Habritellim[ph]. Oh yes yes, he was quite a respectable man I remember, a good-looking old man, he was very...nice little beard. Oh I remember him very well. I must have been, when they died I probably was no more than 12, but I remember him very well.

So he was president of the Habrethillin[ph]?

Yes.

And would you go there with him when you went to visit?

Yes, yes, oh yes. And of course to have that position in those days, it wasn't a case of being rich to have a good position, you had to be quite worthy of the position,

otherwise you wouldn't have it. So that here it's different. Here if you've got the money and prepared to give the time, you can have any position you want.

Mmm. So when you say you had to be quite worthy, in what way?

As far as being a good Jew, a good observing Jew, otherwise you wouldn't have it.

So how religious were they?

Quite religious, oh yes, yes. So much so, I remember, I slept with them, when I went there I had to sleep with them in the same bed, and I had to have my head covered, and he was awake almost all night to make sure that my head is covered while asleep.

But in bed? Really?

Yes, I remember it.

Gosh! Did he wear any special kind of dress? How did he dress?

Very traditional for an Orthodox Jew. As an Orthodox, traditional clothes for an Orthodox Jew I would say, yes. You know, the long black coat with a special round cap which was worn by Orthodox Jews. I remember my grandmother had a sheitel.

Did both grandmothers, or just that one?

No just that one, just that one, just her. But she died only about six months before him I think.

Yes? And what language did they speak?

Yiddish.

Yiddish. What language did you speak at home?

The same, Yiddish.

Yes, yes. OK. OK, I'll leave them for a moment and come back to your parents, and you say your father was sent to your mother's town to learn become...

He wasn't sent, he knew somebody in my mother's town, Sonpolno[ph], who was a watchmaker, and obviously he wanted to learn the trade, so he went there, and he stayed with him, and that's where they learnt to the trade. And from that he had to help to bring the children up.

Really? In the family that he stayed in?

Yes.

Who did he stay with, which family was it?

I don't remember. He only told me about that, and...I don't remember. It's a few years now.

Well, I know! What kind of education had your father had before he had left to do that?

Well he had the usual cheder education, and also from the Polish school.

And your mother?

Mother the same.

What, she had the same...had she been to a school, a Polish school as well?

Yes.

So could they sort of read and write Polish?

Oh yes, yes.

Had your mother had sort of a Hebrew education?

Very much so, very much. Oh yes, but I mean the family she was brought up, she had to. But she was very much inclined among the religious side, perhaps more so than my father. My father was just a traditional Jew, kept everything and so on, but the one who was really Orthodox was my mother.

Was your mother, yes?

Yes, but she was brought up that way.

So she could read and write Hebrew?

Oh yes, sure.

She had learnt all of that. Because often you hear of girls, you know, haven't had much of a...

No, with her, in the home she was brought up she would have a full Hebrew education all right.

So, do you know how old they were when they married, or when they married?

Yes, they were both 24, both the same age. They were both born in 1895, both the same age. They married when they were 24.

Gosh, so when would that be? 1895...

I would say it was about 1920. Yes, 1919 or 1920.

Yes. Yes, just after the First World War.

That's right. Of course I remember my father saying...that was when the...after the First World War when the Russians attacked Poland again, that was when we know the history of those days. It was Trotsky's army wasn't it, or his idea was to really talk about Germany, but they had to cross Poland, and the Polish government then mobilised the whole nation, and to...not to allow the Russians to cross Poland. And I remember my father telling me that he was married, and he had a pair of new boots and he had to use the boots to go to the army. He was more sorry for the boots than for himself! They were the only boots he had. So it was 1919/1920 that, so that's...that would be about 24/25 when they were married.

Did he tell you anything about his experiences in the army?

Yes, he kept saying how it was, you know, it wasn't[??] for the Jew in the Polish army and so on, and went to a certain place and that's where they waited, and then the order came that the Russians pulled back and they were released. Oh yes, he was talking it, about the army, yes. Of course he was about 24, 25. It's 1985....no, 1895...in about 1919, 1920, yes.

Yes, that's right. So, did your parents do anything by way of leisure activities? Did they use to go anywhere or belong to anything, in that kind of way?

No, no, no. No it wasn't...it's difficult to describe, it's difficult to... The place was a small place where we lived, and the leisure activity was shabbat going to shul, and then come home and that's it, and then work, and bring the family up, and that was the leisure, that's it.

Yes. What did your father do? Had he qualified as a watchmaker?

Yes, yes.

And that was what he did was it?

Quite, yes. But when he got back to where he was born, to Izbitza[ph], he carried on as a watchmaker, yes.

Did he have his own place?

Yes.

And he worked on his own, or...?

He worked on his own, but he opened a place in Izbitza[ph] with a friend of his, a jeweller who came from Lodz after the First World War, where the starvation in the big cities was very very bad. After the war there was no food, and there was a lot of people who left the big cities to come to the smaller cities where it was easier to buy

bread. And he got friendly with this person, a man by the name of David Slotbitsky, and they opened a little shop where one was a jeweller, the other a watchmaker, and they carried on for some time there, a number of years, until this jeweller, he was born in Lodz, born in the big city, and he couldn't settle there, and then decided then to go back to the big city. He was a great intellectual the man, who couldn't live without a theatre, without a Yiddish cinema and so on, and for that reason he went back. But they still were friends all the time.

So what happened with the business?

Well they had to close that shop what they had, and he worked from the room where we lived.

Oh right. So was he sort of like more of a watch repairer?

Yes.

People used to bring their watches for repair?

Yes.

Oh right. Did he belong to anything, I mean any club or...?

No.

Shul, a particular shtibl or shul or anything like that?

No, he was a commoner; he went to the average place; in fact [INAUDIBLE]. The shul, he couldn't afford to be a member of the shul, so he could only afford to be a member of the smeddish[ph], which was much cheaper. But there was no hozet[ph], no. Like I said, my mother was the [INAUDIBLE] in the family, but not my father. It's quite possible because of losing his father and his home, his home life for that matter at such a young age, and the people where he worked, where he trained as a watch repairer, from what I can remember they were also just old and traditional Jewish families. So he inherited that. There were very few, apart from somebody who belonged to a shtibl[??], but there wasn't...married men didn't belong to any organisation or went out socialising, this didn't exist, didn't exist.

So in the town, I mean you say there was like a big shul, and then there was the basamedrich[ph].

That's right.

Were there any other...?

Oh there were quite a few of them, there was every kind of hebri[ph] they had. They had a Mizrachi, had...no no no, there were only about 300 families there, so, which was very small, but here we had everything. It was quite good for...it was quite a nice life for young people, boys and girls. We had every kind of Zionist society - well

there were only about 300 families, but every kind of Zionist society from shumurutzea[ph], which was left-wing, to the Bund which is even left-left communist, to Mizrachi and a gudda[ph].

Yes? Gosh, the whole range.

Oh yes, we had the lot.

Was your father interested in Zionism at all?

Zionism yes, Zionism yes. It was a toss-up really between communism and Zionism. My father was quite a forward-looking man, you know, he wouldn't go round with pinters[ph] in his eyes, you know what I mean?

Yes.

Always he was a man who believed in the...to see both sides of the fence. Zionists he felt, well, we need a home, and he tried to have the best of both worlds, and the left-wing side, the communist side, only for one reason I would say he believed in that, is because he felt communism is equality, and you can live as a Jew, in freedom without fear, that's the only reason. Which most people, if they didn't belong to an Orthodox society, were that way inclined, were that way inclined. Only for that reason.

Yes. So how would his sort of sympathies come out? Would he go to any kind of meetings, or how did it show itself?

There were not, there were not really meetings or organisations, or speakers coming...the place was too small. There were plenty of speakers from both sides from all societies, from all organisations, but that was only in the bigger towns. I mean the nearest big town to us was a place called Kolo, and that was a community about the size of Manchester, and that was just the average size, the average size community in Poland. But the small places, only the young people organised their life for themselves. No, we had our own Yiddish theatre, and of course we had to do, we had to entertain ourselves because we couldn't join in into the Polish society. A Jew, you wouldn't be allowed to get there, so we had to organise themselves. Even that, the last four or five years before the war broke out, well it really disappeared, even for the younger people, mainly because young people left the small places, there was nothing for them to do there. To a large extent, not much different than you see now here; in a small community the young people leave. It was the same there. But there it was mainly through the anti-Semitism. With anti-Semitism it was difficult to get work for young people, difficult to make a living, so we just left and went to the bigger city, where, the bigger city, the Jewish communities were big enough so that in many cases we could make a living from one another.

Did your parents have any non-Jewish friends or acquaintances?

Not really, no. Well a neighbour yes who we were brought up with from children or so, they would say hello and so on, but we didn't...it wasn't...it just didn't exist, to have non-Jewish friends, especially the last few years before the war. I would say since

1933, when Hitler came to power, and when he started the anti-Jewish campaign, the Polish people, or Poland as a whole was probably about the first country in Europe to follow Hitler through.

Sort of thinking before that, you know, when you were sort of a very young child, was there any...?

I don't think, no. There was never...

Friendships.

There was never such a thing as a friendship; well we went to school together and that's about all. I went to school in a mixed, which was...because where we lived it was a large community there of Germans of Polish origin, and the school I went was about a third Jews, a third Germans, a third Poles, but we didn't mix. Once we left the class that's it.

How did you get on, you know, sort of within the school? Was there much trouble, or...?

It wasn't easy, it wasn't easy. Again the last few years before the war broke out, since about probably 1934/5, it really became difficult for a Jew, [INAUDIBLE] Especially where we were, it was central Poland and it was probably the most, well, the Poles would class it as the most civilised part of Poland, it wasn't the peasant type of Poland, and there were quite a lot of intellectuals there and they were the first to copy what the Germans had done. That's why it was very difficult in that particular part of Poland, very difficult.

Do you remember sort of any particular incidents, or happenings that you know, stay in your mind from that time?

Yes, always it happened on the way to school. Always. Daily. Throw stones at us. In school itself it was very difficult to keep up. The last few years it was...it wasn't safe to go out at night in the dark for a Jew, you had to have shutters outside the windows so the windows wouldn't get smashed.

How were the teachers in the school, how were they towards the Jewish pupils?

The majority anti-Semites, the majority. Our headmaster was a German, with the name Henkel[ph], a German. Some were worse than others, but hardly any of them favoured us, as Jewish pupils. It was very difficult, school was very difficult. Where in the big cities they had schools just for Jewish children only, it was easier, but we didn't. And we started school at the age of seven. Well my father insisted that I go to cheder till the age of ten full-time, cheder, from eight o'clock in the morning to three o'clock in the afternoon, six days a week. But we had secular education there as well, and when I was ten I had to pass an exam to go to the public school, so I went into class three; instead of starting in class one I went into class three.

So what was this cheder that you had gone to? What kind of a place was it, if you say it had secular education as well?

Yes, from the age of seven we had some secular education, but not much. I remember to pass the exam, my father sent me to a private teacher to be tutored. I don't know how he could afford it because it took him all the time to earn to buy a loaf of bread, but somehow he managed to send me to a private teacher to get private tuition so that I could pass the exam and get into the public school, to a higher class. And I remember I passed class three, which wasn't easy, because they could very easily have said no, the fact that you're ten, you should have started at seven, you start in class one and that's it. But I started in class three. I don't know whether I was brilliant or what, I don't know, I can't remember! (laughs)

The cheder, I mean was it a traditional cheder with a rabich[ph] or...?

Yes.

What, one rabich[ph] that taught children, or...

No no no, several, there were several. One who taught the homishod[ph], or the moran[ph] or the Russian. There was a proper...even though it was a small place, but cheder, we had a proper full cheder, oh yes. Probably here, well here they will class it as a yeshivah, but for us it was only just a normal cheder.

Where was it, what kind of building was it in?

Just two rooms, two rooms that's all, two rooms.

But was it specially for cheder? Did anybody live in those rooms?

No.

Oh it was especially for the...

Specially for the cheder. Now we paid, and what we paid to that was the wages for the rabis[ph] and for the rent.

How many rabis[ph] were there?

Well there were quite a few. I remember four, I remember four yes.

And would they take...would they all take you, or was it different ages that they took?

They took different ages, but mainly each one...it was like a proper school, like one takes you for maths, another for English, another for geography; it was the same there, it was a proper cheder with different rabis[ph] who took for different subjects.

Oh, so it was like a little school.

It was, it was, it was, a little school concentrating on Hebrew education, instead of the secular education, secular religious, enough to...well by the time I was ten I would say I knew the Polish ABC, that's about all, but this private teacher I went, it was a woman I remember, well she really brought me up to the standard where I could sit for an exam and pass it as well. But the cheder was very very little, just...certainly we didn't know any more than the Polish alphabet, no more.

Did all the Jewish children go to that cheder, or were there lots of different cheder in...?

No no, there's only one, there's only one. But the majority went.

End of F2911 Side A

F2911 Side B

Well it was like each little community had their own tradition, their own tradition. That was the way of life, and that's it. There were a handful of the families, which was very rare I must say, but there were a handful of families where they didn't bother, they were more self-styled and reformist I would say, and the children didn't go to cheder, but I would say ninety per cent did.

And they went to this cheder, this was the cheder of the town?

Yes, this was the cheder all right. And it was tough; if you didn't behave yourself you knew about it.

What kind of punishments would be given?

It was quite easy to see five fingers on your face! Quite easy. And if you complained to your father, he would go to the rabbi and say what have you done, look, he came home with fingers on his face. So of course when he told him why, so you got another landing on your father for not behaving!

Did the cheder have like a headmaster, someone in overall charge?

Not really, not really no, no. Each cheder had its own class, its own way. And then, it wasn't a shul, it was too small, but the gud or the Mizrachi, they had a room which they rented, and young men would go there and learn in the evening. But mainly...well myself I was never...I must say I was never inclined to the Orthodox way, no, but we would go to our rabbi on Friday after dinner, quite a lot of us would go to the rabbi and have a discussion about the seder and so on. Oh yes, that was standard, yes, it was standard. Friday night you went to the rabbi's house, and have a chat with him, discussion. Well the rabbis work for a living there. If you go, you [INAUDIBLE] the schmalz selling! And hope that some comfortable Jewish family would send them a chicken for chametz, [INAUDIBLE], but they were dedicated.

Do you remember who the rabbi was?

Oh yes, yes. I remember two rabbis, one who died, a handsome man who died, I remember going to the funeral; I remember going in to his house when he was lying with candles around, and then another one came, a charming man. The other was more modern than the one who died, and he was the one who organised the young people to come Friday night to his house, and we did talk about Zionism. In fact so much so that mostly, the not very orthodox, including myself, only those attended Friday, went to the rabbi, yes. He was a very modern man.

In what way? Can you sort of explain what you mean?

In what way. He wasn't a fanatic; he understood the other side. He didn't go around with blinkers on his eyes. But the rest were just...most of them they went by the coat, and that's it, but this one, he was a tall man with a grey beard I remember, very simply. His wife I remember, he had no family, no family, he didn't have any

children I remember. And he went out of his way to bring in the young people who were not that way inclined, which was right. It's a pity not many do it here. I guarantee it would be successful, if they would do it here. We just talked generally. We took out from the seder or from parts from the Gemara or whatever, and simply enlighten the whole thing, and it became very interesting. And of all age groups, only single.

Boys and girls, or just boys?

No no no, couldn't mix both girls and...no, [INAUDIBLE], how could you do that? No this man worked, he was very modern.

Do you remember his name?

No. I remember he came from another small town to us called Ozorcov[ph], I remember that. I remember the first one, his name was Bel Cohen[ph], I remember him. In fact his oldest daughter still lives in Israel, in Tel Aviv. She went to Palestine before the war. He was a very nice, modern man, anybody could go and talk to him. But the rabbis, they were genuine, they were dedicated men, very dedicated men. They weren't there for what they could get out of it, they were there for what they could put in, for the community, to the people, you know. It's as simple as that.

Are they the rabbis of the shul, or were they...?

Of the town. The only rabbi of the town. If you had to go and...had a shylo or any differences between two Jewish families whatever, the rabbi would settle everything. There wasn't such a thing as somebody going to court, no, no, just go to the rabbi; whatever the rabbi said, was done. Somebody wanted a get[??], you went crying to the rabbi once, twice, three times, ten times. Didn't give it easy; tried to talk them out of it, but eventually...I mean they didn't refuse, but they didn't encourage, which was fair. They were very...all the rabbis they were all...how should I put it? You see, well here most of them like to be climbers, going up, and they mix with high society and so on; there, they serve the people, they serve the people, they were dedicated. They knew their job was to listen to all the problems the people had, and they were genuine leaders.

Was there only the one rabbi in the town?

Only one, yes. He had a job to make a living. Couldn't afford another one. Oh, either the rabbi or the chazzan or the shamash in the shul or the shamash in the smedlich[ph], yes.

Did you ever...you say people used to go to ask shyilas[ph], or, you know, [INAUDIBLE].

Oh yes.

Did you ever go?

Oh yes, many times I took either a duck or a chicken, well they're the same thing. She found a needle or a pin there, or whatever there, and went to the rabbi, yes. And whatever he said was done. Many times he said [INAUDIBLE], and that's it, and we had no dinner on that shabbat[??], because we couldn't afford another one.

No. Gosh. So you say, I mean the rabbi, was he himself a Zionist? Was he a supporter of Zionism would you say?

The second one I would say yes, was. The first one...whatever I remember of him he probably wasn't, probably wasn't. He was probably one who, those who believed to go to Palestine to die and not to live, which a lot of wealthy Jews this is what they left in their will. Or when they got really to an age where they felt well the end is coming here, quite a lot of Polish Jews went to Palestine, and waited until they died and were buried there.

Do you remember people from your little...?

Not from us, no. No, they were not an average people [INAUDIBLE] I don't think, not really. No it's only in the big cities where they had big industrialists and... But it was quite a common thing for a rich Orthodox Jew. Not for the wife, only for the man, yes. Then he felt...occasionally the couple would go, but it was mainly the man who was left on his own, and if he was well and he was rich enough, wealthy enough, he would make his way to Palestine and live in Jerusalem there and wait, so that he can die there.

But you say no one in your area was wealthy enough.

No.

What kind of occupations did the Jews have in your town?

Well, the usual, tailors, shoemakers, and there were small tradesmen, shopkeepers, market people, you know.

Were there any wealthy Jews, any families that you remember that were slightly better off?

Well a number of fairly comfortable Jews; wealthy I don't think is the word, there wasn't anybody who would be classed as wealthy, no. If they would be classed as wealthy they wouldn't stay in a small place, they would go to a big city. There were a few comfortable, who could afford a goose instead of a chicken, and so they were rich. It's a fact.

And what kind of occupations were they in?

Mostly they were shopkeepers, but again towards the end, say the last two or three years before the war, nobody really made a good living there because of this anti-Semitism; it became so bad that the Church did not allow the Poles to go into a Jew, to buy. The Church stopped it.

And this was the Church actually telling them?

Oh yes. Officially the Church told them. [INAUDIBLE].

Before that, I mean before the Church told the Poles not to go into Jewish shops, did Poles used to come...

Yes. Oh yes we traded with them, especially before Hitler came on the scene. Where we lived it was...before the First World War it wasn't far from the German border, that's why there were a lot of Germans lived there; they had a German church. [INAUDIBLE], Yiddish, was more German than Yiddish; completely different from Lodz or Warsaw or anywhere else. It's more of the German pronunciation. In fact German was our second language there.

Really?

Yes. Because we mixed with them, traded with them, and...oh everybody made a living, made a living between the...there were a lot of rich German farmers round there, and we didn't do too bad, we made a living. But of course towards the end it became more and more difficult.

Yes. Well especially if...

Now when the Church got involved, that was the end of it. In fact it was so bad, that they would attack, knifing Jews; the boycott was terrible. And only less than six months before the war broke out the Polish Prime Minister, I remember this, Kokovski[ph], he came out on the radio with a comment that it is not right for a cultured nation of Poland to kill people in the streets, but boycotting, yes. And the Polish [INAUDIBLE], I remember, it was really...he accepted, he made it official government policy, boycotting Jews as part of their way of life, part of their policy. That was only a short time before the war broke out. And they knew war was going to break out, because in March 1939 the whole army was mobilised already, and that's how they were. That's why, when I say, it's only the last year when [INAUDIBLE] came to Poland, when she realised what I meant, that I said very often I hate the Poles even more than the Germans. But when she heard the same stories from other people there, so she realised how right I was.

And so how did your father manage, you know, when this boycott and ban started, you know?

Well, it became very difficult, so much so that the 19...towards the end of 1938, I realised that things were bad. The three of us, my two sisters, myself, were already grown up, becoming adults. And so I wrote a letter to this jeweller, this Kinski, to Lodz, that was a postcard, and describing to him the way of life in this little town and what is happening, and asked him whether he could find me some work there, and perhaps some board and lodgings, so I can earn some money to send home. He was a very clever man, he was a brilliant man this Lidkinski[ph], a great intellectual. He didn't reply to me, he sent a letter to my father, and he said to him, we haven't met for

so many years, he would like to see him, he would like to have a chat with him, he would like to meet him again, and will he come to Lodz, which was about 130 kilometers from where we lived to Lodz. And he said, while you come, bring your little case with your tools. He didn't want to go, and he said how will we make a living. So I said, 'You go, we make a living, don't worry.' And still I didn't say that I started it, I sent a card, I wanted to come, because if I had asked him he would never allow me to come. He was born in that little village, brought up, his parents were born, his grandparents were born there. He wouldn't allow me to go to a city where there was a million population. No, as soon as I get there I will be lost. So anyway I persuaded him, and he went. And of course when he got there he saw this Lidkinski[ph], this jeweller, who showed him my card, and he wiped the floor with him. 'Why didn't you tell me?' Well as soon as he came, he immediately found him where he has got a room, where he can just have a bed there and a little bench, and after a short time, where he stayed, when I went there. And he went with him to all the big stores in the main streets. Because Lodz was a city, I mean the main street was called the Ipiatkovska[ph], was about seven kilometers long, and it was all Jewish owned, all the stores, all the great shops that had been, window displays, everything was Jewish. There were 300,000 Jews there, as many as we've got in England. And he took him into one of the stores there and he said to them, 'Right, this is a friend of mine from the provinces, a good watch repairer, I want you to give him work'. Because they took in watches for repair, and they didn't do it, they sent it out. Well, if David Lidkinski[ph] said that his his friend is honest, that was good enough. Because there was no insurance. I mean if we would take a lot of gold watches, diamond watches, all sorts, and run away with it, that was it, finished, nobody would go for it, nobody could take you to court, nothing. So they gave, and within about six to eight weeks he made more money than he made in a whole year in the little town, and that's how...then we moved there. But we didn't move there till March '39.

And when did your father go?

He went the beginning of '39, yes, probably in January, probably January.

Yes. Oh right, well I won't go on to that yet, because I'm not finished asking you about the other place, but we'll come back to that. I just wanted to ask you, did your mother have any help at all with the house?

No.

No, she did everything herself did she?

Everything, everything.

Washing and...

No washing machine, no fridge, no freezer, no electric or gas cooker.

No. Can you describe your home, what it was like? I mean you know, just as you remember it.

Yes. One room, not much bigger than this room, for five people of us. Slept, worked, lived. And just off the room was a little...we made a kitchen out of it, it was like a little shed, and that was the kitchen, and that was it.

And what...can you remember how it was furnished, what furniture, what was on the...?

Yes yes. Two beds, at night chairs would be made up, just put a straw sack laid on boards and made up for us to sleep.

What, they were chairs?

On top of the chairs we put boards, and covered the boards with straw sack, and the straw sack was kept in the loft during the day. And that was it, put a table in the centre, with five chairs. And that was the palace!

Gosh, so, and your parents, what did they sleep on?

A bed.

They had a proper bed?

Yes.

You said there were two beds.

Two beds. Didn't have any more room than two beds, couldn't fit more in.

Yes. And the table and chairs. Where did you keep your clothes?

We had a wardrobe, oh yes, we had a wardrobe, one wardrobe, yes. No shortage of bugs in the beds, and twice a year, before Pesach and before Rosh Hashonah, took out all the furniture, lime-washed the walls, put new straw in in the straw sacks - we had no mattress; burned everything, burned the straw, was set on fire, all was set on fire and we killed off the bugs.

What was on the floor?

Just boards, which were scrubbed every Friday for Shabbat, and that was it.

Was there anything on the walls, any pictures?

Probably a picture, that's all, a picture of an uncle from abroad and so on, yes.

What about the dishes and the pans, where were they kept?

In that little storage room where it was a kitchen, kept there, which, we didn't have many. We would have two or three for meat, two or three for milk and that's it. No, we managed, we managed.

What was in the little like kitchen area, what was in there?

A stove - not a stove, like a...it was like a little oven what my father built from bricks where we used either coal or peat with rings to heat, and the ashes fell down below, cleaned it out and that's what we cooked on. And in the room for the winter, other oven built from tiles, and again it was heated either with coal or peat, it depended what you could afford. Coal was dear, peat was cheaper, because the area where we lived there was a lot of peat, so it was cheaper.

And did people used to sell that?

Yes, the farmers brought it in. Every Thursday was market day, so whatever you wanted you had to buy in the market. What you didn't buy on Thursday, there was no way you could buy anything, except grocery. But there wasn't such a thing as greengrocers and so on, no, it was only in a market. But in the winter you got nothing, no potatoes, no vegetables or any of those, because if they would bring it in in the market, it froze on the spot. So for the winter everybody had to prepare themselves about October or November until March, and if you didn't, so, there was nothing.

So what, you used to have to buy up and store?

Yes.

Where would you keep everything?

In the loft some of it, and the potatoes and so on we had a dug-out in the room, a sort of a cellar, and kept the potatoes there, because in the loft they would freeze.

So you had a bit of a cellar?

Just a whole dug out and covered with the floorboards, in the room.

I see, yes.

That was the cellar. It wasn't a cellar where one could...

Go down, no.

Send children and make a play-room out of it, no.

No. So you were on the ground floor?

There was only one room, there was nobody above.

There was nobody above you?

No.

And was there anybody...was it just a...what was it, what was this room in?

It was a big complex. There was a single storey and there was a double storey, and then there was another three storeys. It was the whole row. But we lived at the end in the single row.

Ah right, so there was somebody next to you on one side, just on one side.

Just on one side, yes.

Also Jewish?

Oh yes.

Was the whole thing Jewish?

Not really, no no, no. Across the road were non-Jews, and...no, it wasn't a Jewish area, it wasn't. It was more, you had this in the big cities, yes; big cities there were...like in Lodz, I would say it was almost a hundred per cent Jewish, except the caretaker. Almost a hundred per cent Jewish.

So in that block there was non-Jews and across the road there were non-Jews, it was all intermingled.

Yes.

How did you get on with your neighbours?

It was all right again until the last two or three years before the war, it was not too bad, not too bad.

And...there was something else I wanted to ask you about the house. Gone. Oh the toilets.

It was for the whole...that building, in the back, was like a back yard, it was an open toilet, which had to be cleaned out every so often, yes. Which was...there wasn't such a thing as a toilet attached to the sewerage, there wasn't.

No.

Electricity, I remember when they brought in electricity to the town, but we didn't have any, no.

What did you use?

We used a paraffin lamp, yes.

And what about water?

Had to go to the square to bring water. I'll show it to you, I've got a picture of the pump. And I still remember where the pump is now, I [INAUDIBLE], well I must have been five years of age, no more, where there was a well. Yes, the pump was a great advancement, yes, the pump was a great advancement. I remember when they built the pump.

And so what about, if you needed a bath, where would you...?

When we were young my mother used to bring in the wooden...it was like a barrel but it's a big one, wood, then heated a few kettles and pans of water and washed us there. And then there was mikveh to go for a wash. Didn't go from the religious point of view [INAUDIBLE], we went for a wash. In fact until this day I don't know, but as far as I know the mikveh was created for cleanliness, but not as a ritual, but after, for some reason they, especially here even more than anywhere else, it became a ritual.

Did your mother go to the mikveh?

Oh yes. She used to go with my father on a Friday, yes. Always scrubbed each other's backs. Yes, that's the only way to do it. But here, well, they use it...I see the mikveh as a way of keeping yourself clean only, but I cannot see where the ritual part comes into it I must say. But anyway, that's religion! And the [INAUDIBLE] you make I would say is to make sure you shouldn't drown, the [INAUDIBLE] shouldn't drown. That's my interpretation!

What kind of meals would you have, what kind of food did you have during the week?

Very basic, very basic. Mostly the meal was...consisted of the basic, potatoes or starch, anything made with flour; all kinds of dishes with flour. Meat, when we could afford, was there; there were two kosher butchers in the town, yes, two kosher butchers. And of course Saturday that was already standard, we had a chicken. Then towards the end we couldn't afford any more, and I remember it. Chicken we bought on Thursday, it was market day, I went to the slaughterhouse, which was a very nice modern slaughter house, very nice, and the shofer[ph] there did his job. I remember many times it was still jumping around, I put my foot on the head, and...oh yes, many times. And on Thursday the liver was made a meal of, liver, potatoes, put some gravy or whatever my mother made, that was one meat. Friday night was another meat.

From the same...?

From the same chicken. Not [INAUDIBLE] of course, but [INAUDIBLE] and so on. Fish to start with, yes. [INAUDIBLE] had to make it, there wasn't such a thing as buying a shop [INAUDIBLE]. In fact until I came here I didn't know there is such a thing as tinned food, didn't have it. Saturday was another one, and Sunday was the fourth meal, the white, the breast of the chicken.

From the same chicken?

From the same chicken, five people have four meals.

Did you used to have a cholent on the shabbat?

Yes, yes. It was I think in the summer only, yes, only in the summer. Because we had to have it in the summer because if we had had any meal prepared on Friday it would go sour, and that's the reason why on the Friday almost everyone went to the baker. Again nobody....

End of 2911 Side B

F2912 Side A

He brought the son, Zelig[ph] in to live with him because he had a better living accommodation than this Zelig[ph] had. I don't want to record[??] on your tape.

You don't?

That's 1914, Sonpolno[ph] was under Russia. In fact only a few miles from there was a small place called Piatkov[ph], that was already the German border. And he was called up, and it was an interesting story about this Josef Mendel[??]. He was in Manchester; he came about 1913, he came to Manchester, because my grandfather, Lezer[ph], had a brother here in Manchester by the name, Tsudik[ph] Levy[ph]. He changed his name from Tzaski[ph] to Levy[ph]. And this brother of my mother, this Josef Mendel, he came here to his brother to work as a tailor, because this uncle Tsudik[ph] was a tailor, and he lived in Manchester, and then in 1914 the war broke out, he went back to Poland...

After the war had broken out?

As soon as the war broke out in 1914, he went back to Sonpolno[ph] to join the army, because his father would have to pay some money; if he wouldn't come and report to the army his father would have to pay so many roubles. So, he didn't want to cause his father any problems, he should find[??] the money, so he decided to go home and join the army. Otherwise he was here the year before. And in the army, what I remember my mother used to tell me this story, it was an interesting story, about 1918 when the Revolution broke out, he risked his life actually, came out from Russia, because he was there with the army, he got stuck in Russia, to see his parents; he smuggled himself out from Russia through the Revolution and so on, to see the family and tell them that he found a nice young woman by the name of, whatever her name was, I forget now. She was, I remember the photograph, a beautiful woman, and he was going back to marry her, otherwise he wouldn't go back. Because he found this woman, and he went back to Khar'kov, and he married her, and that's how he stayed in Russia. But he was here.

And he was in Manchester.

Oh yes, yes.

So your grandfather Lezer[ph] had a brother in Manchester.

Yes.

And is there family from that brother?

Oh yes, yes. Well no, not now really. He had a...no, they're all dead, they're all dead, the whole family. One lived here in Park Road, 110 Park Road, she was married to a Loof[ph]. You know Colin Loof[ph]?

I've heard the name Loof[ph].

Her father's brother, she married him. She lived here. Her sister, Sarah Cohen in that big bungalow just lower down, that was her sister, she was a Loof[ph].

So was that...now let me just.....[BREAK IN RECORDING].

Somehow I wasn't lucky to find the relations.

So he [INAUDIBLE] after you came.

Yes.

And did he marry a Manchester woman?

No, no, an English woman.

An English woman?

Yes. Because he came as a single man. That's a Manchester woman, yes. Yes, yes.

And do you know her name?

No. I think she died before him.

Did your grandfather Lazer[ph], did he have more brothers and sisters, or was that the only one he had left[??]?

Yes, yes. He had...I don't know about brothers, whether he had brothers, but he had several sisters. In fact my wife's grandmother who was Tanya's great-grandmother, her mother and my grandfather Lazer[ph] were sister and brother.

You're joking! My goodness! So that...I can't do that now! So your wife...

Tanya's great-grandmother.

So your wife's grandmother. On the mother's side or the father's side? Your wife's mother's mother?

That's right.

Maternal grandmother, yes. And your...

Grandfather Lazer[ph]...

Grandfather Laser[ph]...

Were sister and brother.

My goodness! And Grandfather Lazer[ph], sister and brother. Oh that's good, that makes an interesting family tree! Yes. Right, OK. And, so that's your grandfather Lazer[ph]. Do you know anything about your grandfather Fagamiriam[ph], whether she had any...?

No, not really, not really, no.

And do you know anything about your grandparents on your father's side, Mendel and Zipora[ph]?

Yes, she had one brother, oh, what was his name, I forget now. His name was Falshavsky[ph].

Oh!

Yes, Falshavsky[ph]. Yes, I remember that. His first name I don't know. Five years ago I would have remembered. That's the tragedy.

Yes. Falshavsky[ph].

Yes. And, well my grandmother used to tell me that they had a brother who went at a young age to San Francisco, and you must have read about the San Francisco earthquake, what was it, in the early century.

1911 I think.

That's it, yes. And he had...he was single, I know she told me that, and he lost all the property and got killed himself there, in the earthquake.

Oh gosh, and that was the brother of Zipaula[ph].

Yes, and she always said, if that brother would have been alive she would be rich, she would never be short of anything. But there you are, it was not to be.

No, no. Gosh. So that was two brothers that you know of.

That's right. I don't think there were any more, I don't think so, no.

And on your grandfather's side, Mendel's?

Well he had quite a number of brothers, yes, and they were all in Izbitza[ph].

Yes?

Yes, the whole family. My grandfather's, who are named after, father[ph], his name was Heinmoishe[ph]. Now my father told me that he lived to the age of 110; whether they missed ten years on the way, or twenty years, I don't know, but he lived to the age of 110. He was all right in health until the age of 100, then he went to bed and stayed, and was in bed for ten years. How he remembered is because on the Friday

night, while he was in bed, for ten years he was in bed, everyone in that little village there, Izbitza[ph], when they came home from shul Friday night, they went first to say good shabbat to [INAUDIBLE] Heimoishe, Heinmoishe[ph]. It was an honour to go and honour the old man. Which it was very much so in general with the Polish Jewry, you always honoured those people. I mean I remember before we went for kol nidrei, I used to go around with my father to all the old neighbours, to all his old aunties, uncles, and to wish them all good year. That was standard. Now when I came here and I followed on the tradition, taking our three children, Tanya, Stephen[ph] and Simon, every year about an hour before kol nidrei I went round to see the great-grandmother. And she looked so great, she says her children never do it, and nobody has ever done it. I always went round there. But this was standard, you went round to see the old people and wished them a good year. It was a different world, it wasn't the selfish world like today.

Do you remember any other sort of like traditions like that that you used to do? I wanted to ask you about traditions that maybe were connected with birth, or marriage, or death, you know, sort of life events.

In a small town like where I was brought up until I moved to the big city, to Lodz, any event, happy or sad, the whole little community was involved. You know if there was a funeral, everybody went to the funeral. There wasn't such a thing, who...no, oh I don't know...no, I'm not going to the funeral. Funeral, everybody went to the funeral.

What, women as well?

Yes.

To the cemetery?

Cemetery, sure.

The women went to the cemetery?

Yes, it's only here you [INAUDIBLE].

Well I was wondering about that, you know, whether [INAUDIBLE].

I don't know where you get the idea from.

I don't know. So all the women and all the men would go...

The women, sure. They cried, they pulled their hairs out and so on, they got hysterical, but they went. And there wasn't such a thing as here. I went to a funeral, children shouldn't go to a cemetery while you've got parents; where they get the idea from here I'll never know, never know. For instance Tishe B'Ov, I went with my father to shul in the morning, to the kinot, and after, so, almost the whole town, all men, men only then, went to sit in the cemetery.

Really? Actually went to sit in the cemetery?

Went, sitting on the grass in the cemetery there. I remember there was a big tree with little pears; I looked forward to go there and pick up the pears and eat them.

And that was each Tishe B'Ov?

Always, every year, so we went there and sat there. After all it was a sad day, so where can you commemorate a sad day? There's no other place than in the cemetery. There was no [INAUDIBLE], it wasn't...it was no law about it, it was just tradition. But the tradition was all connected with the practical way of life. Unfortunately that's why it's very very difficult for me to get used here to the...I mean don't take it wrong...

No, don't worry about it!

It was very difficult for me to take for granted the ultra Orthodox way of life, because I don't know where the... I will give you an example. What happened last week. A cousin of my wife's, her husband lost a brother the end of last year, sometime in December. He's making a wedding, his daughter is getting married in July this year. So he wasn't sure, it's in the year, should he have music or should he not have music. Anyway he went to ask a very well-known rabbi from the [INAUDIBLE] shul, not a small rabbi, and in fact probably even in Izbizta[ph] he would have a job in the koma shammash[ph], and that's beside the point. Obviously [INAUDIBLE], I wonder how many would have had a job to become a shammash in a shul there, and [INAUDIBLE] the rabbis [INAUDIBLE]. And he said to him look, what am I supposed to do? Well he says, being a brother I think three months in mourning is enough. With[??] the brains! You got the shivah which is accepted, then you've got the sheloshim. After that, you go according to circumstances. You didn't go and ask another, we knew what we should do, what not. You go...where does he get... When I heard this I said well, where did he pick out from, I would like to see where it's written, where it says a brother, three months is enough. There you are!

What about superstition? Was there much superstition in...?

Yes, yes.

Can you tell me anything about that, anything that you might remember that people did, or what they believed, you know, from that point of view.

Just nothing.

Nothing.

Just...but there were a lot, there were a lot, oh yes.

I mean what about surrounding babies, were there sort of superstitions around babies?

Yes, it's like, this is where even Tanya, my wife gets it, for instance to put on a baby, or somebody shouldn't get in a horror so as not to put the evil eye, you had to wear a

red ribbon. Tanya still does it. She got it from her mother, and her mother got it from her grandmother. Because her grandmother, she was born in Sonpolno[ph].

Gosh.

Yes, oh yes. Tanya's great-grandmother was born in Sonpolno[ph]. She came here at the age of 16, and she was here 80 years; she died at the age of 96, only a few years ago. In fact our Stephen[ph], the oldest great-grandchild, when Stephen[ph] was 21 we made a big party because he was the first great-grandchild to be 21.

But superstitions you don't sort of remember?

I don't remember. They will probably come to me, but... But there was, there was, in each...each little town had their own [INAUDIBLE].

Really?

Yes. It was handed down from generation to generation.

What about surrounding sort of illness, were there superstitions about...?

Yes, yes. Always go to a...all the men in the town, somebody who was very very ill, to go...put on big candles in the shul and go there and say [INAUDIBLE], that was accepted.

Light candles?

Oh yes yes yes. Big candles like that, with boxes with sand, and you went to shul with the big... It's the same [INAUDIBLE] before. Everyone. Here you have a candle in the house, right? Instead of having it in the house, long candles like that. Oh did that smell during the fast and everything, it was horrible, but we stand it. Boxes were all over with sand, [INAUDIBLE] everybody, big massive candles, and just stuck them in the sand and they burned for 24 hours.

Yes. And you used to light those when someone was ill?

When someone would go ill always, the town, the rabbi would call all the men together and say...well, [INAUDIBLE] it was, [INAUDIBLE] was the main thing. I remember, his name was Pyensky[ph], I remember he was a [INAUDIBLE] - well he was classed as the doctor, he did everything there. He was a doctor like I was[??], but he made himself into a doctor. But one child, a beautiful little boy took very very ill, but this Pyensky[ph] he was a complete non-believer, which is very unusual, very unusual, for a small place. There were the odd ones. He just didn't bother. And he was very ill, they brought doctors from all over, and couldn't do anything for him. And so the rabbi decided to bring all the men[??] from the little town there into the shul, lit candles, and he told them, I remember distinctly this, it's something that sticks in my mind, to give all his clothes away, the child's clothes away to the poor children, and bring the child into the shul, lit the candles, said [INAUDIBLE], and opened the [INAUDIBLE]. It's something which you see in .

Yes.

And the child got better. Well myself I would say it was a coincidence, it happened, he went through the crisis and it happened and was better. But the child was better. He perished the same way as everybody else perished in the camps after.

And it was the rabbi who [INAUDIBLE].

The rabbi decided to bring everybody in, and to carry on there. I remember this distinctly. I must have been...maybe ten, maybe, maximum, no more.

So what was this felcher[ph], what did he do?

He cast himself...he was a quack. No, because there they had leeches[??] [INAUDIBLE] and so on, and they took them round to all the farmers there and, they believed in them. He was a clever fellow, he was a good-looking man I remember; he always had a good saying when he went round to the farms, 'I guarantee you this patient will leave the bed'. And of course, if he died he left the bed, and if he got better he left the bed, he couldn't lose! That was his favourite saying. He said, 'Don't you worry, he will leave the bed'!

Did he ever come to your house?

No, no. No, [INAUDIBLE] my father, he had all the same equipment. Mostly he...the farmers around [INAUDIBLE] they used him, they used him mostly.

So what happened in your family if someone wasn't well?

First was the...it was called bangis[ph] like...I remember he used to go around with my father, he was like the poor man's doctor, dentist, everything.

Really?

Yes. And I used to go out to a child or if there was = somebody unwell with[??] little cups, glass cups, put a flame in and always on the balconies, put that on the balcony, drew out the skin. In fact when I came here, I stayed with my relations, Sidney[??] Friedland's grandparents, they came about, maybe five years before the war, the son brought them here, they had a bangis[ph] with them, they brought it, yes. Probably the first thing they packed!

Really! And your father would do this, he would go, he would be called in?

Oh yes, called out to everyone, and he used to come in, it was terrible, we didn't have telephone. And they used to come in, mostly were children, and he used his own judgement how many, how big the child is, whether he would use half a dozen of these cups[??] and stick them on the back, or eight or ten, depending on the sizes. And he used to do it. And in a little basket he used to carry it.

Did he teach you how to do it?

Oh yes. It was like a little stick with cotton wool, dipped it in methylated spirit, and put it on a candle, in the flame, he put in the heat, the flame to the cup, and very quick, bang. So I used to hold that stick, the flame, and he used to put it there. And then he had a little bottle of...well it was poison really, because being a watch man he had his fine tweezers, and if somebody had a toothache, so he took a tiny little bit of wool, dipped it in that little bottle of whatever he bought from the chemist, and stuck it in the hole, and it helped. And that's all they could afford. Who could afford to go to a dentist?

And was there ever a time when that didn't work, that other measures had to be taken, and did you ever have to call in anybody else?

Whoever could afford, brought a doctor.

Was there a doctor in the town?

There was at the latter end, but going years back, no. There was just...they called themselves a felcher[ph]; the barber was the doctor, yes, he pulled the teeth out, and so that's how it was. There was a dentist already in the last few years in our little town as well, but again who could afford to go? Only a small minority could afford to go. And then, Kolo had already a hospital, so if you could afford, either they would call the doctor from Kolo, or Wloclawek was another town nearby, even bigger than Kolo, and it was really more...well there was more really available in Wloclawek than Kolo. Patmoris Golding[ph] comes from there, yes, he comes from there. [INAUDIBLE] in the bigger town, yes, but you had to be able to afford it. The nearest hospital, proper hospital, was in Lodz, that was 130 kilometers away. I mean a hospital there for poor Jews was Poznansky's[ph] Hospital, which is a very famous family. In fact I've got the pictures from the cemetery, the Poznanskys[ph], Tanya[ph] will show it to you, they were probably the wealthiest family in Poland. And they build a very big hospital just to treat the poor Jews. The same way as Nathan Laski[ph], the Laski[ph] family built the Jewish hospital here, the same way.

So I mean, do you remember anyone from your town having to go to...?

Oh yes, oh yes. But I would say most of the...when they went there already, they were so ill that they never came back. But I can't remember anyone...I remember people going there and never coming back, but I can't remember to be honest somebody who went there and was treated and came back. Because, we just took it for granted, well, it was all right, we had our own remedies, various medicines we bought from the chemist. Then I remember my mother used to make different wine, for instance raspberry wine, when it was the season for raspberries you see there, so we had, wherever you went round, on the window everybody had raspberries, jars or big bottles, raspberry wine, to ferment. Raspberry wine is supposed to be - and we kept it only for that purpose, didn't use it for anything else - when a child had a temperature, they give spoonfuls of raspberry wine; they said it helps to make the child sweat.

Oh, yes?

Then bilberry wine. So that's supposed to be, if a child has got...it only concerned the children; for adults it didn't matter, only when the child is ill! If a child has diarrhoea, so bilberry wine stopped diarrhoea. Then of course we made others, cherry wine - no, that was only for yom tov[??], yes, oh yes. Yom tov[??] or a special occasion, special guests; one couldn't just go and have it when you wanted, no. But really we made...you couldn't go out and buy it. Of every kind, whenever fruit was in season you used to buy it, and you used to see everywhere, right round... I don't remember the Poles doing it, but the Jewish people, everywhere you could see on the window, so when the sun comes to help it to ferment, and then it went down in the cellar, which was a hole in the middle of the room.

Did she make anything like that for Pesach?

For Pesach, yes, oh yes, all our wine. Chanukah we used to make the wine from currants, raisins or currants; mostly my mother used to make it from currants, yes. And then, also Chanukah we used to bring in a goose which was in the kitchen, or the so-called kitchen but that's where it was, under the table.

What, you mean you kept it there?

Yes.

Alive?

Yes, and for two weeks we used to force-feed it with long dumplings, and there were many many...it was from a special flour, some special grain, which was very fat, just to fatten up the goose. And I remember when we actually had it slaughtered after the two weeks, the fat around the goose was about, probably about two inches of fat right round, and that fat was rendered, and that was the schmalz for Pesach. Oh yes, schmalz for Pesach. And there were many occasions we had the families - in fact one from our little town who lives in London by the name, well his name was Motri Izbitsky[ph], now he is Martin Bennett, and they were terribly poor; they looked after the mikveh, terribly poor. They were about eight, ten children. When their mother made these big dishes of these dumplings to feed, they had to give two geese they needed so much mouths for Pesach, and the children were so hungry by the time the mother comes to feed the geese, the children ate the dumplings! Oh yes. There were many families like that, people were poor, and hungry as well, and cold, no clothes. We didn't have central heating!

Where did you get your clothes from?

Good question. Where we could afford. It was there, it was there to buy. Well you could buy, because everything you wanted was there. All we didn't have is preserves, anything in tins, or packed food, that didn't exist, just didn't exist; everything was freshly made. Of course we didn't go for the variety of what we have here. Clothes was a problem; many many thousands and thousands of Jewish families all over Poland went out and bought secondhand clothes, which was a very good business.

Shops, markets, secondhand clothes. We were a bit more fortunate, we could afford some new clothes, but mainly was what we got from the relations here, which they sent once a year.

What, from...?

From the Friedland family in Manchester.

Really?

Oh yes. Sent us a sack of old clothes, to all the...my mother's brother and sister in Sonpolno[ph]. The only one they couldn't send is the one in Russia, but they did write to him from here. I was very disappointed when I came here there wasn't a letter or a photograph, which I am convinced they had it and probably lost it. I remember, I was looking, and I still say until this day, I remember distinctly myself and my two sisters, once a year we had a circus came for a week to the little town, so there was a photographer there. So the three of us had a photograph taken, specially to send here. Well, this Auntie Lia[ph] when I came here she says no, never had it, but...she didn't have it. What she had, what she did have, is her uncle Lazer[ph], which was her mother's brother, which I've got a whole family photograph, and that's the only photograph I've got. I mean if you come to us you will see that I have got a photograph taken of my mother from there when she was, before she was married; she was probably about 24.

End of F2912 Side A

F2912 Side B

She was my grandfather's niece, in other words my mother's first cousin.

Your mother's first cousin. So your grandfather must have had a brother or sister, who had a child, Lea Friedland[ph].

That's right.

Was it a brother or a sister, you don't know?

My grandfather...my grandfather's sister lived here. She was married to a Poznansky[ph]. And that's how his uncle Tsudik[ph] came, and that's how...

Oh, yes.

Then this, my uncle, the one who was in Russia, he followed, and also that's how Fabian[ph] Friedland, who was the son of the Friedlands who I lived with, he brought me actually over here, that's Sydney's[??] father, Sydney[??] Friedland's father.

So the sister who married a Poznansky[ph], she had a daughter called Lea[ph].

No. Lea[ph] was a niece. The daughter was Tanya's great-grandmother, the old lady; she was the daughter, Poznansky's[ph] daughter. But Lea Friedland[ph] was the daughter of another sister.

Of yet another sister?

Yes.

So there were quite a few in Manchester.

No her sister wasn't in Manchester, no. Only one was in Manchester, married to this Poznansky[ph].

Oh I see. But you say that Lea[ph] was the daughter of another sister.

What happened, this Lea's[ph] son, Fabian[ph], he died 20 years ago, 20 odd years ago, he came here before the war from Kolo, they had lived in Kolo. He came here before the war to this uncle Poznansky[ph].

Ah, I see.

Her mother's sister, he had three wives.

Oh gosh!

So the children there was mine, yours and ours.

Oh, right, right.

And he came what, before which war, Fabian[ph]?

Before the last war.

Before the Second World War. I see, right. So Lea Friedland[ph] actually lived in Kolo?

She lived in Kolo, yes, and this Fabian[ph], he was born in Kolo.

And he was born in Kolo, I see, right.

But she always took...Lea[ph], she was always involved with the family, at home. When she came here she was the one who was in touch with the family in Poland. And this was, it was tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of families in Poland before the war, they managed to exist, and this was only existing, by getting help from some sort of relative who was in England, America, Australia, or Argentina and so on. Yes, that's how we existed. Then we got every year, we used to get a pound I remember for Rosh Hashonah and for Pesach from this Fabian[ph] Friedland[ph] here. And for some reason, maybe business went bad just before the war, he used to send us ten shillings, half a pound. He could afford a pound but he...

Did the Poznanskys[ph] ever send anything?

Oh no, no, no.

Or your...or [INAUDIBLE]?

Well, he always sent my grandfather, he helped him, but otherwise somebody else, no. But he wasn't a very...he wasn't...he was a tailor here. Really, from what I can make out when I came here, he didn't have much. Not everybody was rich here before the war either, no. No he didn't have, but he was a very nice man. I know my mother had a photograph of him on the wall, it was there, and I was told he was the most handsome man. Well my grandfather was only small, but an extremely good-looking man, a very distinguished looking type of a man. I remember a nice cut neat little beard, very nice, a nice old man.

And what about shoes?

Again, secondhand shoes was quite the thing. Everything was there, I mean there was not a shortage of it; the shortage was the cash.

The cash to buy.

That was the shortage.

Yes, yes. Right. Now, I just wanted to ask you as well about religious observance in the home, you know, sort of what kind of standard your parents kept.

A hundred per cent strictly Orthodox home, a hundred per cent. They observed the shabbat, the minoli[ph], [INAUDIBLE], strictly observed, very, very. But after, it was a traditional home. My father didn't go around with a beard, and my mother didn't wear a sheitel. It was a hundred per cent true kosher Jewish traditional home, and that about sums it up right I would say, a hundred per cent.

So shabbat and every yom tov were completely observed?

Oh yes, oh yes.

Your father would never sort of work or anything on that, no.

No. Father used to go to shul; well all right, he didn't go all the time three times a day, but we went twice a day.

Really, yes.

Oh yes, yes.

And yet you said before you were saying to me that in some ways your father wasn't as religious as your mother, that she was really the...

She was more orthodox only for one reason, because he had to fight his own battle.

Had to find his own...?

To fight his own battle from a young age. My mother, she had a very orthodox upbringing, although it was the biggest tragedy I remember, this Golder Scheiner[ph], she was my[??] favourite, she was a beautiful looking woman, in fact my younger sister looked just like her, a beautiful woman. And it was...my grandparents were absolutely heartbroken. She was a bit of a rebel, and she finished up working, going around with a Jewish theatre group troupe, and she finished up on the stage. [INAUDIBLE] going to a...like you go here to the palace or the opera, we had our own theatres, our own Yiddisher[??] cinemas and so on. And she finished up, and this is where she met this husband, Vol Schwarz[ph]. Also I liked him very much, he was a very...I've got a photograph, I must find out where it is. A handsome man, a handsome man. And they were both very very good, very nice people, I liked them very much, I liked them very much. And then they got married; he was a shoe repairer, this shoemaker, this Schwarz[ph]. Yes, he made a good living. But they were my favourite.

So she more or less left home did she, to go on the stage?

She did, she did, and it was terrible, terrible. Again there were all the families, it was nothing unusual for the father just to disown the child in a case like this. But not my grandparents, no. No, no, they were heartbroken, but they didn't disown her, no. But she was extremely nice.

So coming back to the difference between your father and mother, you were telling me, you know, that...

My father I would say was just traditional, where my mother probably was more inclined to the Orthodox side.

What's the difference? I mean in reality, in practice, was was the difference?

It's the same as here. When the Orthodox...I mean when they were Orthodox they were genuine Orthodox. I'm afraid here I cannot say the Orthodox are genuine, far from it, or very few. When someone was Orthodox he was Orthodox, genuine all the way, already with the traditional Jewish clothes, with the black coat, the special cap with a beard and...and he probably [INAUDIBLE] you harder than the next ones. My father wasn't like that. But if my mother would have had a chance, she would have gone all the way, even with a sheitel as well, because she was more orthodox.

But she didn't wear a sheitel, no.

No, no. I think my father at work, in the winter he had to have his head covered because it was cold, but in the summer I remember he sat without a hat in work.

Ah yes, yes.

Well this you wouldn't get many...but in the same time he knew that he has got to daven[ph] three times a day, [INAUDIBLE] the shul, kept a hundred per cent everything, on yom tov, shabbat, a hundred a one per cent.

I see, so it was more sort of from the point of view of dress and...?

Yes that's it, it was more modern.

A bit more modern, I see what you mean. Right, OK. Now, did he ever help your mother in the home at all? I mean did he ever do anything in the house?

Yes, oh yes, yes. My father was very handy, for instance when we were small, when they used to make all the clothes, he had a sewing machine and did the clothes. He was very handy, a very handy man, yes. They both worked together hard; when you're in one room you have to, you have to.

Yes. Did the children ever help at home?

Oh yes.

Did you have jobs to do about the house?

Yes, yes, we all as I say mucked in all right, once we grew up.

Yes? What kind of things did you used to do?

What I used to do? It was so small, how much...I remember we used to...like in the winter when there was snow outside, which there was snow for three months, three or four months snow was there, it never moved, and they used to go around with the white sand, and you used to throw sand, and that was my job throwing sand and to scrub floors, so they shouldn't get too dirty. Still got...it made a mess but anyway...

So it got inside the house?

Inside, on the floorboards.

You threw the sand down.

Yes. Which, it stopped the boards from getting dirty from the snow, from the slush. Oh we had our methods, and it worked.

Yes? And how often would you have to do that?

Every Friday, every Friday, yes, to make sure the walls stayed nice and clean for over shabbat. Yes, only Friday.

Did you used to do anything else, any other jobs?

Not very much. Maybe I was a bit spoilt, after all I was the only boy.

Oh yes, yes.

I was a very poor eater, I mean very...I was very choosy in eating. And though my mother couldn't afford it, but she always tried to make me something, say I never liked anything made from dough, so everybody would have that and I would have potatoes.

So did your sisters help more in the house, did they do more would you say?

Yes. And more or less I helped my father more with work than anything else.

What about discipline? I mean how strict were they as for bringing up the children?

I can't remember being hit by my mother, definitely not, no, she couldn't harm a fly. No, she wouldn't hurt anyone. I don't remember, I don't think so, I don't think so. Maybe the odd shout and scream and so on, but not...can't remember, I don't think so.

I mean if someone had done something wrong, I mean who would...?

We were told off and that's it.

Was there one parent who sort of did the telling off more than another, or did it...?

Not really. Arkel[ph] was the favourite of my mother, probably. But I looked like my father very much. I remember when, especially when we lived in Lodz, already

[INAUDIBLE], march, '39, many times when someone brought in a watch for repair they left it with my father, and of course I was nearly 18 already then, my father, what was he then, 1895, he was 44, and if somebody left a watch with him and he was out and he came when I was in the shop, they would say, 'Oh I left a watch with your brother' automatically, or vice versa.

Oh really!

Oh yes. When I was 18 I was as tall as my father; I would say I was about the same height as I am now when I was 18.

Now, as a child, do you remember any of the games that you used to play?

[PAUSE FOR THOUGHT] We didn't have anything really, no. Games mostly in school, you had the various activities there, but at home...

Or with friends?

My sisters didn't, but I joined at a very young age the Zionist movement. I started off with the shema atzea[ph], a left-wing... I don't know why, but I was always inclined more to the Left than to the Right, always, always. I remember when I was already a big boy, 16, 17, Saturday after dinner I would go out to meet the friends there with my cap on my head, and as soon as I went around the corner I took it off and put it behind [INAUDIBLE], I always did it.

So what did you do in Hashumahatzea[ph]? What were the activities, what kind of things would you do?

Zionist education. Oh it was good, it was good. Our dances, our sing-songs and so on. But somehow I finished up with the young politzian[ph], which was incorporated with the Maccabee[??], which also was concerned with sports; the same as here, Maccabee[??], yes. We had our own orchestra, brass orchestra.

Oh really. Did you play?

Yes, yes.

What did you play?

Oh, some trumpet, I can't remember what it was, what we kept blowing. The harder I blew the more...it was an oboe[??], the more holes came out!

Did you play sports?

We had our activities. Yes, sports, volleyball which was very popular, table tennis indoors. Yes. Until two or three years before the war the activities for young people were very very good, very well organised, yes.

You said they organised dances as well did they?

Yes, we had our own dances, our own theatres, our everything. You could go and join the Poles watching a film or watching a theatre.

Did you ever see a film?

Yes, oh yes. Oh yes. [INAUDIBLE] we went to see, there was only one cinema in Izbitzia called the...in Yiddish it was called the Izbitz[ph], but it really was .

Yes. And you used go go to the cinema?

Yes. Most Yiddish films were brought from America.

Really?

Yes. Up to maybe five years before the war or so you could go to watch a film, yes, but the last two or three years before the war you wouldn't dare. Because if they see you, well there was nothing for you to go there, and if somebody behind you sees you are a Jew, and to put a knife in the back and run away, stab you, it was quite common, quite common.

So you were telling me about the sports, and games, and what you used to do with Poalitzia[ph]. Did they used to organise, I don't know, camps or anything?

Yes. I didn't go, we didn't go, but they had the Hachsharah, yes.

Hachsharah[ph], yes.

Oh yes, very popular, very popular. Because to qualify for a certificate from the British Government to go to Palestine, you had to be in the Hachsharah[ph]. Only those in the Hachsharah[ph] had a chance to go and...to get whatever notation it was. Because you know, I don't know if you read the history of the British in Palestine, I mean every other week that they pulled out their pink paper or white paper, grey paper, red paper, and each one cut back.

And you never went, you never went on a Hachsharah[ph]?

No, no I wasn't old enough. Most...you see there was a problem there, because at 21 you had to go to the army, so those who were in the Hachsharah[ph] it's when they finished the army.

Oh, I see.

Yes, then they did the Hachsharah[ph]. Everywhere, even in our little place there was a half a dozen or so young men and women who were in the Hachsharah[ph] then. They went around chopping wood for bakers to heat the oven, and those sorts of jobs. Get a few coppers or a bread[??] and so on, and they lived on that. But that was all over Poland, the Hachsharah[ph], not over Europe.

Yes, that's right. So did people, friends, did they run the Poalitzia[ph]? I mean were there organised...?

Oh yes, the older ones.

The older ones used to take groups?

Yes. We knew, I mean by the time I finished there, even at the age of what, 16, 17, believe me I knew the history of Zionism then more than the biggest leading Zionists in this country.

So you used to what, have study groups? Was it all...?

Sure.

And learning about the history, yes.

We had our sing-song and our dances.

Do you remember any of the songs?

Oh yes.

Do you fancy singing one?

No, but I've got a tape of old Yiddische[ph] songs, which I brought when I was in Israel last time; I put it on very often. It's not what I know from now, it's what I...going back 50, 60 years ago, I know them from then, all from the [INAUDIBLE]. Some songs we would sing, songs which were sang on the stage when they had the theatre groups. But all the songs not from what I know from since I'm in this country, no, all from before.

And were they songs that you used to sing in Poalitzia, are they on that tape as well?

Some, yes, yes. Of course anything to do with Poalitzim was all connected with the...well it was all connected with the dream of being in Palestine, of going to Palestine. All, each song was always dreaming of one day going to Palestine where the oranges grow and the sun shines and so on.

Did you know people in your town that actually did go?

Oh yes, oh yes. There's quite a few even still alive in Israel now, oh yes, quite a few went. Oh young people, and women as well. Because the way, how we got round the...and surprising till this day that the British fell for it, that the Foreign Office fell for it then. The certificates were always handed out to men, and what happened, they married a woman. And it was, some marriages stayed but very few. They married, and they knew, right, they were married...only a civil marriage. And so they go, and they want a certificate, the husband and wife went, and that's how we made use of the certificates. Hardly anyone went, or very few, very very few - some couldn't be

bothered, they didn't want to get involved - very few went just one person, one certificate; most of them got married. And one Tanya knows, [INAUDIBLE] daughter, Shashanan[ph], she's still alive; she's a good age now but still alive, Tanya knows her very well, and she went. Somebody else got a certificate, so all right, he married her, and the one name, husband and wife, and it was legal.

Yes. And when they got there did they...?

They got there, they went their own way and that's it, finished, it was forgotten. Oh forgiven, forgotten, that's it. Oh yes, we got by that...quite a nice...who knows whether thousands, or tens of thousands or what, we will never know how many women got there that way, but that was quite a usual thing. And the British, they knew, obviously they knew; whether they intended to turn a blind eye, or didn't fall for it, or it just didn't dawn on them, we will never know, we will never know.

Did your family ever think of going to Palestine?

Not really, not really. You see it wasn't easy. I mean how many had the money to buy a ticket? It wasn't easy. I know I'm very often asked, even by my own family, 'Why didn't you get out?' But people don't understand, it's just, it's not easy. Who had the money for the ticket? And then there's another thing, the last five, six, seven years before the war it wasn't open immigration already, it was with restrictions. But in any case you couldn't get a whole family, a certificate for a whole family to go. It's easy to ask the question but it's almost impossible to give an answer to these things. It's simple, it's obvious to say why.

Especially with hindsight.

Yes, to say why. But to give a clear answer to this, it's just not on, it's just impossible, unless you lived through it and seen it. I will never turn around and say, especially I was already a young man, I was an adult already, [INAUDIBLE], it never even entered my mind to say...well my father was an intelligent man, he could see what is happening, why didn't he get out with us? No no, I wouldn't dream of it because I knew, it just wasn't on, it wasn't possible. No. Of course looking back, if I were in his position I would probably act the same way, yes. No, I would never blame...I don't say any of us would attach any blame and say, oh, why didn't my father make arrangements to go. I mean there was a time in the early Thirties when there was free emigration, the doors were open to the Argentine, and quite a number from our little town went there, but again, what happened? From each family, only the husband went and they left the wife with the children, and most cases in terrible poverty. But they went, and eventually after a number of years they saved up a few pounds and sent them tickets and they took them over there. But I don't know, I don't remember of any one family where the whole family went. You could just about manage to get enough money for the head of the family to go.

Yes. And then how did the...I mean how did the wife and children survive?

It was a problem, it was a problem, it was a problem.

Were there charities, or...?

There were charities, yes; we had various charities. It was quite well organised; I mean for a little town it was better organised believe me than Manchester is organised here, living in a properous way. For instance we had in Izbitza[ph] a giminis herzetbank[ph], which was a bank where you went in, you borrowed money, you undertook to pay back over a certain period so much a week, and it was free of interest. That's it you see. Now...

Who ran that?

It was called the gemilas herzelbank[ph], gemilas herzel[ph].

Yes. Who looked after it then?

There were so-called well-off people in town, and between the better-off people, everybody lent, made a loan to that bank of so much money for a year, and after a year if he felt he can afford to leave it so he left it, and the poorer people came, they borrowed maybe 50 Zlotys, which meant paying back one Zloty a week, and that was free of interest. Because by law - that's why I can't understand here, you've got Jews, prominent Jews, moneylenders. If anything is forbidden in our religion, it's a moneylender; it's the worst thing you can do, lending money. Yes, you can lend money, there is a provision in the Talmud, you are allowed to lend money, if it is your living. Right? If you make a living out from lending money, you can do that, but not to charge any more than the official State interest is. If he charges one or even half a per cent more than the official, then say you will pay more than going to any bank, it's one of the most criminal things a Jew can do. Well look at the moneylender, look at Sir Sidney Hamburger, [INAUDIBLE], that [INAUDIBLE] Hamburger is one of the most prominent moneylenders in Manchester. You have the Gordon[??] brothers from Leicester[??] Road who sit in the [INAUDIBLE] shul, prominent seat, which in the old days would be reserved for top top men. They are millionaires from moneylending.

Were there any moneylenders in Izbitz[ph]?

Not at all, no. Oh you wouldn't be allowed into a shul if you would be a moneylender, you wouldn't. No, you would be shouted down [INAUDIBLE]. If a moneylender, if anybody knows somebody is lending money and making profit out of it, I guarantee you will feel the cold [INAUDIBLE], he would be shouted down.

Just wasn't a done thing.

Just wasn't done, wasn't done. The gemilas herzel[ph], I went there, it was very well organised and the majority of the people went there. I remember there was a room[??] in the square [INAUDIBLE] some prominent family, and he ran it, and every Sunday you went with your little book and you paid them.....

End of F2912 Side B

F2913 Side A

With a little book, and on top it was how much you borrowed, gave one Zloty, paid in, brought the balance down [INAUDIBLE]. And it was accepted. I don't remember, I'm sure it must have happened but I cannot say that I remember anyone who hasn't paid back. There probably was, it probably happened, it must have happened. But these people who gave money towards the fund, they were completely free of interest, and free of any... The running, the administration completely voluntary; nobody made one penny out of it, no. Not like here, moneylenders living in the luxury and going round on cruises, no. And these are the people very often who go there...it just wouldn't be on. That's why it's so difficult for me to accept; the average Jewish way of life here is just unbelievable. Anybody else you interview they don't know this, they can't know anything about this, they don't know. And this happened in every little village, in every small town, big town.

Were there ever any special payments for say Pesach time?

Oh yes, yes, yes, definitely, when people [INAUDIBLE]. It was very well organised, the way how we lived and so on. Actually it wasn't like here. I mean this is one thing which I subscribe to it and I believe in it, here, were the belevolents, the work that they do, that's about one of the few institutions which I look up to in Manchester.

And of course that was founded by the Russian and Polish Jews who came across.

Oh yes, yes, yes. They founded it. [INAUDIBLE] housing they simply brought it here.

With them, yes.

Yes. You see now, I mean being involved with the museum, you know how it started, so you can see now it all happened; they didn't invent it here.

Oh no.

They just brought it with them, yes. And this is the only thing which I feel is... I mean the number of, especially when I was in business, and working, all the time always, I was always in business, working and dealing mainly, 99 per cent with non-Jewish people, they almost gave me the impression, you know, they always say every Jew is rich, and the number of times I said to them, I said to them right, if you want, I will take you about two weeks before our Passover, and our New Year, to a place where you will see the number of people, the number of Jewish families who come there and they receive a parcel of food, some clothes, and a few pounds in their pocket. And they never answered. I use that very very...in many times in my days here, many times. And all this was brought over.

So did that happen in Izbitz[ph]?

Oh yes, sure.

For Pesach?

Yes, yes.

And who organised that? Was that again the the gemilas hasidim[ph] or was that another...?

Gemilas herzel[ph], they decided they will use so much money to spend for that purpose, yes.

Was that the only...

That was the only one, the only one which was there. It was only a small community of about three hundred families, which, and we had our kehillah which, I don't know whether you know the, kehillah means administration, right? We had a president, Mr president[??], he was the president, we called him the presis[ph]. I remember [INAUDIBLE] Fuovitch[ph]. Yes. And every year they always choose a baker; there were quite a number of Jewish bakers which [INAUDIBLE]] some of them. In fact one where it's still got [INAUDIBLE] in the square, and they were...he's got...in fact April, last April there was a wedding, and the two daughters of this baker lived in Kiryat Motski near Haifa, near [INAUDIBLE]. I told them, your baker still exists in Izbitza[ph].

So every year they used to choose a baker?

Every year the kehillah, they choose one baker to bake matzos.

Oh, yes.

And naturally he made more money out of it of course, but every year another baker, and they said right, you were last year, this year, you. So they had to do it, the rabbi had to go and kosher the oven. I remember how it worked; it was always heated with logs, the oven, it heated there, and very very hot, special temperature, extremely hot, to make sure it burn out any hommet[ph] or anything, scrub everything and so on. And we went from the town, went there, they made a few extra coppers for Pesach, and used to roll matzos, big ones like this, you had to take a hammer to bang it, to break it up. Not like the matzos like today here. And for a matzo meal, matzo flour whatever you call it. So, took a cloth and with a hammer, and banged it away, crushed it and made the matzo flour.

Who used to do that?

We did, as children, it was the children's job.

Oh really!

Just hit like this on the matzo, and with a cloth and a hammering, crushed it.

What you do that at home or...?

At home.

At home?

Yes. Bought the matzos and made the matzo flour at home. And that was the Pesach. And the fat we had already, the schmalz we had already. I remember my mother she was, well some of the neighbours there, oh they said, they laughed at her because she was too refined. She didn't want to make it too fat so she always used half margarine, half bull's[??] fat. And so the wine was made, chadukum[ph], the fat was made, the matzos we bought, the matzo flour we made, and then that's it, and there was plenty of potatoes and plenty of onions, fried onions with, egg and and onions. How we survived these Pesach I will never know, because the food was very tough, very rich; how we digested it, how we survived it I will never know to this day. It would kill me today!

Coming back to the kehillah, you mentioned there was a president who you remember. Was there a whole, like committee of them?

Oh yes, oh yes, there were several of them. Again it was elected every year by the...very democratic. The country wasn't democratic but the Izbitza[ph] was democratic, very democratic, yes. According to Talmud, democratic. Because you know the Talmud is based on freedom; I mean democracy originates from the Talmud, yes, that's what it is. Freedom and socialism.

So would your father vote?

Oh yes.

For who he wanted in the kehillah, was it a big thing, to elect?

Sure, everybody went to vote. And it was the canvassing, and very often if you fight[??], it would be very serious. It was a big honour, it was a big honour. When my father was a [INAUDIBLE] he would never, you know, he would never be involved, no no no. He was the type if he...yes, helping somebody, yes, but getting involved, no. Just in case it does something wrong, so he would rather not do it, you know, he wouldn't. But it was a big thing voting, everybody had to go and vote, and there was always a fight, invariably, and said no, this shouldn't be, and he shouldn't be on the list, this one shouldn't be on the list. Yes. When we engaged a chazzan there was a fight. One says he's good, another says he is not good enough. Oh yes. And everybody had a say.

Everybody had a say.

Everybody had a say. I was asked once by an extremely good friend of mine, became very friendly with him, an Englishman, a true Englishman, sort of a man where whenever he came to see me, every two weeks from Birmingham, with his bowler hat, summer or winter with his suit, umbrella, with his thick white collar and his black coat. And a very knowledgeable man, he knew the Bible backwards, his name was

Bob Aitken[?]. And he said to me, once he said, Mendel, he says, there's something he wanted to ask. He deals mainly with Jewish people, he buys from the Jewish suppliers. He says he feels he can ask me the question which he wanted to ask for many years, more than any of the people he has known much longer than me. Will I promise him I won't be offended? I promise you. He says almost all the people he deals with, he knows they're very well off, and they all vote Labour, they all support the socialist party. He says, how can they do it? That this wouldn't exist with an Englishman. If you make a good living,, you're a Conservative, that's it. I said, 'Mr Aitken[ph], you know the Bible, you studied it, you read it.' I says to him, 'Our Bible, our Talmud is based on socialism.' Immediately he wouldn't let me carry on any further, he says, 'You have answered me the question'. That's it. And this is it, this is the thing. Like now in Israel, it's straightforward democracy. They didn't have to bring in a constitution, how to run a democracy; we just went by the Talmud and they carry on. Obviously you've got to vary it according to circumstances, you have to, but basically... And that's how we live, that's how we lived even under the conditions as we did, based on the democracy of the Talmud. Help thy neighbour and so on. And we carried on; sure we had disagreements, we had fights.

Do you remember any fights in particular?

Oh yes, there's plenty, there were plenty of disagreements, fights and shouts and screams, especially between shomer etzea[ph] and the Mizrachi, and then of course any Zionist [INAUDIBLE], that was fired, completely fired. But we had all the organisations. We had the shivah bochlin[ph], we had everything.

Oh. Was there a yeshivah?

No, too small. They had to go to other cities for the yeshivah.

Yes. So what did you do when you left school? How old were you when you left school then?

15. 15 nearly 16.

And what did you do?

Well at that time it was already a problem. The Poles brought in the Polish watchmakers so there was no room for Jewish watchmakers. The reason why they did it, so the Poles shouldn't have an excuse. Well if they want their watch or their clock repaired they must to to the Jew, because there's no Pole, so they brought a Pole in. So then we started making paper bags for the grocery shops.

What your father did?

Yes, and the whole family was very much involved in that.

Yes?

Oh yes. Working away many times till one o'clock, two o'clock in the morning.

How did you do it?

[INAUDIBLE] by hand. Well there were no factories, everything was by hand. There were not manufactured paper bags anywhere in Poland. It was all hand-made.

So you had to buy in the paper...?

You buy the rolls of paper, and we made it, different sizes. Quarter kilo, half a kilo, one kilo.

How did you used to stick them? Did you stick them together, or...?

Oh yes, yes, all was...still remember everything, do it now.

Really?

Yes, quite easy, quite easy, yes. I remember the factory today. Wouldn't make a living from it, but could open it!

And the whole family used to do that?

Oh yes, we were all involved, we were all involved. The last few years we were all involved in it, yes.

And would the Poles buy them from you?

They couldn't help themselves because there was no Pole who made it.

I see, yes.

Well they were not worried about this so much, because it didn't involve the masses. It only involved a few grocery shops so they were not worried about that.

What gave your father that idea? I mean was it his idea to do that?

It was actually a relation, a cousin of my mother's who lived there, and they actually came here and then they went to Israel, and the daughter still lives in Israel who we are very friendly with. And you see again, another sister of my...I forget her name, probably...she's got the daughter who still lives in Israel, she's probably [INAUDIBLE], probably she will be a grandmother, she will know. Another sister of his.

Of Lazer[ph]?

Of Lazer[ph]. She had two daughters, one called Volf[ph] and another one Heimiru[ph], or we knew her as Hella[ph]. And they were in Izbitz[ph]. And she suggested to my father, why don't you start making these paper bags?

What, Hella[ph]?

Hella[ph], yes. And she came with her husband before the war. Actually her husband, Moishe yosedfina[ph], he he went to Palestine before the war, and as a British subject he came to Manchester, and then he brought his wife here, and they had three children here. The three children are all, one in America, one in Canada, one in Israel. I hope that maybe the one in Canada, she is marrying, a son of hers is getting married. She came to our wedding, and we may go there, I don't know.

So she suggested, oh I see, yes.

Yes.

So was that what you did then after school, was that what you went into, making the paper bags with your father?

Yes, we worked very hard on it, but again we carried on, it gave us bread.

Did your father no longer do any shoe repairing?

Watch repairing.

Watch repairing, I beg your pardon.

Well he still did it, yes. Oh he did it all the time he used to, but obviously not as much, not enough to give him a living, but he still did it.

So what kind of hours did you work on on doing this?

There wasn't such a thing as hours. You worked for as long as, if you knew you were likely tomorrow, (you sold it by the kilo), we had to deliver so many kilo, so we went and carried on making. And to dry them out, to dry out the glue and so on, we used to spread them out on top of the baker's ovens, where they baked, from the heat dried out. Yes.

What, in the baker's?

Oh yes, went to the baker's, went on top, and just spread them out to dry them out. It was great fun. Well Ros I think I will have to.....[BREAK IN RECORDING]

There was the cradle of what?

The cradle, that the whole area, which was central Poland really, of the andekis[ph]. The andekis[ph] were the organisation who promoted anti-Semitism in Poland. Anyone in Poland would say, 'Were there any andekis[ph] in your town?' You say, 'Not too many.' Another would say, 'Oh, they were full of them.' Another one, 'Oh they were terrible.' But Andekis[ph], they were the organisers of the anti-Semitism, they promoted anti-Semitism. Like you see now in Israel, they put a name to it now, intifada, the uprising which is promoted, which is organised by the PLO or whoever

they are. The anti-Semitism in Poland was organised by the organisation called Andeks[ph]; Andekis[ph] were members of the Andeks[ph]. And there where we were, they were the absolutely...it was terrible. Really they went to town there; they organised themselves there. Because vortzvagerischnen, Poznan, all that part was the most...the biggest part for the Andekis[ph], it's where they originated from and they began there, and from there they were.

So did they have like groups in different towns belonged to the...?

Oh yes, yes.

And in your town was there a...?

Sure. The police were members of the Andekis[ph].

Really.

Even the police. You couldn't go to a policeman and say, 'Oh, a Pole stabbed me.' He would answer you, 'Well you're alive,' and that was it.

And that was it. And the Jews, were they never able to go to the police?

Not at all.

No, no.

I remember my mother used to take the paper bags to the grocery shops, used to carry them. One day a Pole went there, he recognised her all right, everybody knew the Jews in the town, and he gave her a good slap on the face. So she saw a policeman and told him, he says, 'You're alive,' and that's it! And that was the end of it, which was wrong. Or the administration, they were all poisoned from the Andekis[ph], so we had no chance there. [INAUDIBLE] in there we were not so bad. Probably another year we would have been no better off.

Oh, that's interesting. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Well I wrote a card towards the end of '38, to this friend of my father's, this jeweller, Ledkinsky[ph].

Yes.

Describing to him the situation nowadays and how bad it is and so on, and the main reason for it, never dreaming that we will ever finish up there, because I didn't think my father would leave there - as soon as he heard of a big city he was terrified. So that he should try to find me a job and where to live, and earn a copper or two.

Yes, you've told me that, yes.

Of course he didn't reply to me, he replied to my father, and he said, 'Come, while you come bring your tools'. And well, after a lot of persuasion I had to go... I didn't tell him what happened, but he said...I never told him[??]. He said tell me[??], he just wouldn't go, he wouldn't go. Of course his main worry was, how are we going to make a living? I says to him, 'It's all right, we will do it'.

What did you do while he was away?

Well, the same, we carried on with our manufacturing. In those days that's how we manufactured the paper bags. There was no machines to do it. So we carried on, the whole family, and when he finally went it was the beginning of, maybe January '39, and after what, by about March this friend of his said to him, [INAUDIBLE], he saved up enough to take the whole family over and settle in...in settling down there.. And he came home, we moved by horse and cart, there was no...well it was the only transport, I mean we couldn't afford to go by lorry or a car or whatever. The transport, in fact the father who transported us from Izbitza[ph] to Lodz, the daughter of this fello she lives in Haifa, and she's a doctor now, although she is retired now. She survived, and she took up medicine after the war in Poland, and is quite a well-known neurologist. I see her quite often when I go there.

And did her father do that for a living?

Yes. Well before we came, obviously he had where to live, which was on the main street, not the best street but it was reasonably good.

Do you remember the street? What street was it?

Yes, it was Franshish-kanska[ph] number 17. I showed Tanya when we went there and it's not there any more. It's a Red Cross building they put up. I was pleased to see it isn't there any more.

And what did it consist of, what was it?

It was one large shop with a big window, very large, and this was partitioned off; it was big enough to partition off for a bedroom, a kitchen, for a shop, a dining room. It was, to what we had in the small place it was a fantastic place.

Were there facilities for the kitchen?

Yes, there was already, not hot, cold water in the room, yes, oh yes. Oh there was a proper toilet in the yard. It was a big building, a very very big in [INAUDIBLE]. I can't understand why they pulled it down, when I was there with Tanya, I couldn't believe it, it was a very good solid building. There was already a toilet with sewerage. No, it was like a different world. I enjoyed it I must say, I loved every minute of it there. There was a place where a million population, 300,000 Jews. Where we were living was the Jewish district.

Did you have to partition off the rooms yourselves, the room?

Yes.

How did you do that?

Mainly with curtains, with curtains mainly.

And did you bring furniture with you?

Yes. Some we brought, some we bought there. Oh it was good, it was a luxury to what we had before. My older sister went to learn dressmaking, my younger sister got a job in a cloth factory, and I worked with my father, because we took out repairs, watch repairs from the big stores in the main street, and so I was more or less running there and back all the time. And my mother for the first time she looked after the family in the home. Yes.

Did he teach you how to do watch repairing as well?

Oh yes, yes. [BREAK IN RECORDING - TELEPHONE]

Looking after the home. Did your father teach you watch repairing, that was it?

Yes, oh yes, yes. And we did very very well. Certainly for the first time as far as I can remember we weren't short of anything. We had already meat twice a week or more maybe, and chicken for weekends was already, just for Friday and Saturday only. Oh yes, it was...the family did very well. Then of course no more than six months after, the war broke out.

Now we won't go on to that yet, I just want to try and get a little bit more of a picture of life there. I mean did you join any groups in that six months?

Nothing, it was too early.

Too early.

Too early, no, we didn't get involved, no.

Where did your father or family go to daven[ph]? Did he go to any particular place?

Well ten minutes' walking distance from where we lived was the major synagogue in Lodz, a massive place, massive. There were I would say between three and four thousand seats, with three balconies for women. Still remember the chazzan, his name was Vinigrad[ph], a tall fellow about six foot six. Well they had to have somebody like him, very powerful, otherwise you couldn't hear him. And then they had, this I still remember, a Professor Zachs[ph], a professor of music, had a choir of 60.

Gosh.

Yes, from six, seven years of age to seventy. Oh it was like a concert. Friday night you had to queue up to get in, quite some time before they opened the main doors.

Really? People were queueing up before they opened up?

Surely. You go on a Friday night particularly it was like a big concert. Massive place, massive.

This must have been sort of unusual for you, because coming from...

It was, it was, oh yes. And that's where we went to davent[ph]. Because everybody had their own seat, they bought a seat and that was for life, and you had your name there, and of course wherever there was a name you didn't sit, it was theirs. And they had the right, if somebody sat, to ask them to move. Because they did pay for the seat, it was theirs.

So were there also plenty of free seats for people?

Oh yes. I think that particular, it was the biggest synagogue in the town. Any public holiday, any celebration, any public holiday, any event, whatever they celebrated it was always in that synagogue you know, it was the main one.

And did you make friends at all in that first six months that you were there?

Only with neighbours, because it was a big building. I don't know how many there were there, there must have been at least fifty families in that building. The neighbours, one, he's still...saw him only about three or four years ago, he lives not far from [INAUDIBLE] in [INAUDIBLE], an old neighbour.

And what did they do?

I don't remember to be honest, I don't remember what they did. I know when I went there with my wife last time, so we [INAUDIBLE], thanks to my mother and father he is alive, because for some reason he went away on his own and when he came back his brother and his parents were already taken away. That was already of course during the war. So my mother like took care of him and helped him and so on. So I didn't remember I must say, but he's older than I am, he's quite a bit older than I am. Nice fellow, they were a nice family. There were neighbours there, we made friends. But otherwise, by the time we set ourselves up and so on, that was it.

That was it. Did you come across any non-Jews? Were there any non-Jewish neighbours at all?

Not necessarily, not there, no. I mean we had mostly non-Jews who came into the shop there either to buy something or watch repair or so on. It was quite a main street, it was the main street where the industry part was, so going to work and coming from work, it was...there were more people passing there than Market Street here. I mean the main street, I remember when I went, this time I went.....

End of F2913 Side A

F2913 Side B

That street stretched for seven kilometers, which is what, about four miles, five miles probably. And it was, I would say ninety per cent were only Jewish stores. The display windows and the crowds before the war in that street, there was more life than Oxford Street today in London.

Gosh.

Yes. Oh it was fantastic to go there, all the Jewish restaurants and the stores, it was massive, massive. In fact most of...the biggest part of the street, where all the big stores were, the Germans virtually took the stores down brick by brick, because they were looking to see whether the Jews had built up the walls, which some did, and kept the stock between the walls. Some did in fact.

Do you remember any sort of like anti-Semitic incidents that took place in those few months before the war?

Again, not in the part where we lived. We heard incidents in the newer part. We always...we had more Jewish daily papers in that city than you've got English daily papers here. It was always, every day in the Yiddische[??] papers, there were always reports of a Jew stabbed in that street, a Jew stabbed there. Oh yes, but I didn't come across because I didn't go that far, I didn't notice it. Where we lived...

On the main shopping street it was sort of relatively quiet.

It wasn't too bad at all. One knows it was a Jewish district, and if a Pole would come in and raise his voice there, well there were enough tough guys, Jewish tough guys there, they would just kill them off and that's it. Oh it happened every day almost. I have seen one case, that's on the street where the big synagogue was, and they were all there, there were all open toilets, and where they took one and put them in the toilet and drowned them in the toilet. Yes, that was when they were all...I mean most of those who were in charge of the transport and loading and unloading was, that coaches came from all over Poland bringing food in and taking goods out. So it was very very busy. It was the most industrious, it was the main industrial city in Poland. Well it was the main, next to Manchester it was the main textile industry in Europe. Manchester was known the first, and Lodz was known as the second industrial city in Europe for textiles. And then they had a lot of heavy industry, engineering. There were 300,000 Jews, 300,000 Germans of Polish origin, and the rest were Poles. The Jews were involved in a...they covered the commerce and large industry, such as the textile, where the Germans they covered more the heavy industry. And mainly the Poles worked either for the Jews or the Germans, because they didn't have the brains for anything else.

So really I mean those first six months you were there were sort of settling in.

It was more settling in, yes; I didn't have a chance really to benefit. I remember I made enquiries already where the Maccabee was in the city, in the newer part, and I thought oh, one day I will go there, but I never got there, I never got there.

No. Did your father, besides obviously the friends that brought him over, did he know other people in Lodz, did he know anybody?

No, no, not really, not really. Yes well two people. They used to live in Izbitza[ph]. No, one moved from there, this Slotbitsky[ph], a tailor, same story as with me. The son, who survived, he lives in Tel Aviv, I see him each time I go there, [INAUDIBLE], so again with him, he went first to work in this big city and then he brought all the family over, and well, they lived in luxury there, working, the whole family working very hard as tailors for the stores, and they did very well. And another one, Tsukia[ph], which, he also lived in the time when this jeweller lived in a small place, and every shabbat we went to visit, they lived in the same street. In fact I showed Tanya where they lived, we passed there. It was the way down, the way to the big cemetery, that street.

So those were the people that the family knew?

Yes, yes. With them we kept close, they came to visit us, we went to visit them.

Had many people left Izbitz[??] to go to other places?

Oh yes, yes. The last two or three years before the war the young people they left almost every day, always for Lodz and Warsaw, yes. Because they could always get work, you could always get work. One, I remember when he left, maybe four or five years before I did, he left for Warsaw and he did very well. His parents, his family wouldn't go, and he went there and he worked in a factory making bortsch, kosher bortsch, because it was an industry there, you had three and a half million Jews in Poland. Now say ninety-five per cent ate kosher. Now here you say how many people do eat kosher, not how many don't. With us it was the case, how many didn't eat.

Yes, yes. OK, and then of course war broke out, and do you remember that, do you remember what happened?

Oh I remember it all right. How it was, September the first 1939, we knew it was going to be because the end of March they mobilised already, took all the young men away, put them on the border. They were mobilised already but they still had time, even in the Polish parliament, still had time to pass anti-Jewish laws, to forbid Jews to eat kosher, these ritual...kosher killing; they limit it, and it was forbidden. That was the law. Lady Prester[ph], was a member of the Polish parliament, she introduced the law, that it's too [INAUDIBLE]. In a place like Poland, she found no problem. Anybody who introduced an anti-Jewish law got it passed, got it passed.

How did the Jews manage when that was passed?

What they did, they were only allowed, they didn't forbid it altogether, they allowed so many places in Poland to have ritual killing, and only so much a week: they restricted it, they restricted it, that's what they did. I remember, because there was free votes, free election, I think if there were six Polish Deputies to the parliament,

Polish Jewish Deputies to the parliament was the maximum out of three and a half million. One very prominent, I knew him very well, Lade Minsberg[ph], I remember he was only a little fellow, brilliant man, was a brilliant man, he, when they passed this law and he stood up in parliament, he says how can you pass a law like this at a time when we should stand shoulder to shoulder. And made a most fantastic speech, and he said you can see, the blood is almost running under our feet, how can you do this. When we're facing the enemy. They didn't bother, just got up and took all the chairs, threw at him, and injured him and they had to carry him to the hospital. So they passed it, and just by sheer weight of votes, so we got one or two in, that's all. Otherwise, we had no say, no. But they did, they kept up anti-Semitism to the very very last moment. Even at the six months when it was mobilised, that was when this Prime Minister Kotkovsky[ph] came out with the word 'Offshin'[ph], which means, this we cannot[??] understand, accept it, this would [INAUDIBLE] pass the killing people on the streets, no, not for the cultured people of Poland. But they could think 'offshin'[ph] yes, that I can accept. That was weeks before we moved out. So we had no chance there. I am convinced that if war wouldn't break out, we had no future there; we would have finished up... They wouldn't do it in a way like the Germans did because they didn't have the brains for it, but they would do it in a crueller way over a much longer period.

Starve them out.

Yes. I mean the poverty, every day you could see more and more Jews going around begging, and many times you would see...there were no beggars, they were born[??] beggars; they couldn't look you in the face. But through the boycott and one thing and another, just they couldn't make a living.

And this was as much in Lodz as elsewhere?

Oh yes, oh yes, yes. Not so much, it wasn't so much evident in Lodz as it was in small places, wasn't so much, because if the worst happened we could always make a living one from another, it wasn't so bad. In the kosher restaurant we had there was fantastic. I mean the stuff what they serve here, in a kosher restaurant, I wouldn't give it to a dog there, no, wouldn't touch it, you wouldn't make a living from selling this.

And did you used to eat in a restaurant?

Oh yes, yes yes. Not the family, but me alone; I did a lot of running around there and back to the stores, and I always passed these places. One was my favourite, I was always going there for a egg matzo, and turkey bortsch, that was my favourite. Oh yes, I enjoyed it but...

It didn't last.

It didn't last, it didn't last.

So what were you doing on the day war broke out? Do you remember anything in particular about the day?

It was Friday September the first, 1939. About between six and seven in the morning we heard a big bang. But [INAUDIBLE] come depressed, because they kept going over the border, the Polish-German border there and back for about three or four weeks before, and we knew it was going to happen. We didn't have a radio, but we had newspapers. And we heard a big bang, and then went out in the street and the rumours soon spread that the main railway station in Lodz got bombed. Then you could see planes going over and we looked up and we said, oh, these are Polish planes, we didn't know, but it wasn't obviously. And then we heard another bang another [INAUDIBLE]. Even before they declared war they bombed already all the main parts, the railway stations, the power stations and so on. And eleven o'clock the Polish President came on the radio to tell the nation that at eleven o'clock the Germans declared war on Poland.

Did you hear that on the radio?

Oh yes.

Everyone sort of tried to get to a radio.

It was announced to say that at eleven, any time now we should stand by the radio, the President will make an announcement. We knew what it would be, what it was. And he said, I still remember the words, he said, 'Don't waste any bullets, we are one nation now'; all of a sudden we became part of the Polish nation. As a President, that one was a very decent fellow, he was all right. And again they started to take more and more men to the army. I wasn't yet for the army they rarely took the army from 21, yes. Went into the army from the age of 21. Then, by about Tuesday I would say, we saw masses of people walking, walking, walking, mostly men, because men ran away. As they approached, they crossed over the border the Germans, they ran away, made their way towards Warsaw. These hundreds of thousands of people, the town was absolutely packed, crowded with the people everywhere walking. Then an order came for the people in Lodz, that all men, all able men should make their way to Warsaw. So, actually you do it; my father and myself made our way, but we realised that we would never get through. After walking about 24 hours till we met this town past [INAUDIBLE], and were absolutely millions of people, all across the fields, everywhere, masses. And the German planes they just came over us, and we could see the pilot leant out from the cockpit with the machine-gun and just sprayed there. We decided the following day, we would never make it for Warsaw, we will go back, and we came back, and we stayed there until Friday the 8th of September when the German army occupied Lodz.

Do you remember them coming in?

Yes, yes, yes. We went out to watch it, the main street where, just a couple of houses[??] where we lived, that was the main street to Warsaw. And it was a sight to see, it was a sight to see, no question about it. Hollywood with all their art, with all their skill, couldn't have organised such a sight as it was there to see, with the finest precision; with everything absolutely, the whole army, either on horses or in trucks or in cars and so on, everything...it was really something which was worth seeing. We stood there, and the average German soldier, he didn't know about the Jews. They

didn't know really, the average Germans at that time didn't know anything. But of course, it didn't take long and the Volksdeutschen, that's the 300 Germans who lived in the area there, well they soon put on the armbands with the swastika and they took over. When they took over and they knew exactly where the Jew is, who was a Jew and where they are, and what they are, and they co-operated with them, the right-wing[??], and it started, it started. Cut the beards, taking people to work, clean the toilets, clean the streets, and it started almost immediately, almost immediately.

Were you involved in any of that, or your family?

Well I was taken to work, clean the streets, yes. If they didn't catch you on the streets, they came into the...they knew where the Jews lived, they came into your home. Oh yes yes yes, everybody, hardly anybody who could escape it.

So what, they would come into your shop?

Come in and take you away, and if you were lucky you came back, if not you were never seen again. Started almost on day one, day one, and we could see it, what would happen. We still didn't believe it was going to last very long, nobody expected it, didn't expect it. Maybe, maybe I don't know, we'll never know. Taking so much, who would have known? I begged my parents to go across to Russia. But again it's something we shall never know why they did it. I don't know how much you know of the Polish history before the war broke out. This Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, just a week before the war broke out when Russia and Germany made a pact, they won't attack each other, and they split Poland in half, they divided Poland between themselves. And they [INAUDIBLE] only about thirty miles past Warsaw was the border. For some reason, September October they left the border open, you could cross over there and back if you wanted. We will never know why, whether they made this in their pact or what, to give those who wanted to run away a chance, who knows, we will never know. And I begged my family to come, and let's go, and they didn't, they said it won't last long, the war with all the bombs, with all the planes, it cannot last long, we will wait. And then of course, and then they closed the border and that was it. And this went on, it was difficult to get bread, a Jew wasn't allowed to queue for bread, a Jew wasn't given a bread ration. It was a problem, it was hard, it was hard. We had no bread, no fuel, no electricity, nothing.

How did you manage?

We didn't manage, it's as simple as that, we didn't manage. But looking back, I wonder how we existed. But it's surprising how one can exist with very little, almost next to nothing, quite easily, quite easily. Yes that's why I always keep saying that one can die more from over-eating than under-eating. And then of course it was about December '39 they decided...[BREAK IN RECORDING] About December '39 for some reason they decided that Lodz was annexed to the German Reich, so rumours went round, leave the city because no chance to survive if we stayed, because they made it part of Germany. Of course we had no papers by then, we weren't allowed anything; to listen to a radio it was forbidden. What we didn't realise, that quite a big part of Poland was annexed, not just Lodz. So we decided we will go back where we come from, so my mother and two sisters went to Sonpolno[ph] and

my father and myself went to Izbitza[ph]. Of course when we get there we find they are also annexed.

How did you get there?

By risking our life. Train, where a Jew was forbidden to travel on a train, but still went. We left everything in Lodz. After a few days we realised there it's even worse than in Lodz. Of course the smaller the city then again, the Volksdeutschen they did the most damage. Because there were over three million Germans in Poland, they were the worst. They were the German Fifth Column.

Where did you stay there?

Stayed with different relations there, but we realised it's no good, so we contacted my mother and sisters, and we met, I forget now where, we met up somewhere and we travelled back to Lodz. We stayed, we just said, whatever will be will be, and that's it, we tried. I remember one stretch we travelled on the train, and the Poles, they knew we were Jewish, so they looked at us, shaking their heads and thinking well, you won't reach wherever destination you're going to. And after we passed, after about an hour later, someone said to us, 'You're very lucky' [INAUDIBLE]. He travels on the stretch every day, and every day there were Germans go up and down, and any Jew they just throw them out as the train goes and that's it. But this is the only day where he has never seen a German. We got there and we got back; fortunately the home was still there, and carried on the best we could. We got some bread on the black market for a bit of gold or silver or whatever, and we carried on.

Had all work ceased? Had your father stopped all kind of work?

Yes, that was finished at that time.

Yes. So there was no money coming in at all?

No no. Well it was in January, the beginning of January 1940. Well then after...towards the end of January they announced that there is was going to be a ghetto in Lodz, they are going to form a ghetto, and the ghetto will be completely sealed off by May the 1st, and they planned, everywhere was put up where the ghetto was, where the ghetto will be, where it will be fenced off and so on. Fortunately, Tanya has got the photos[??], one day she will show you exactly where we lived, and also the street where only fifty yards down from where we lived, that was the border there, that was the fence of the ghetto.

Your place was inside?

Just inside.

Just inside.

Yes. Which was a very very big advantage, very, because during February March and April all the time Jews living outside the ghetto came in, they were allocated so many

square feet per person. A room like this probably would have been for about eight, nine people. But if you lived there, you were not bothered, you were not troubled.

Who did the allocating?

By then, now that's another story. Skipped that. The first day they entered Lodz the 8th of September '39, they knew exactly, because they had their Fifth Column, they knew exactly where everything was, every committee, every department, everything. So they went into the Jewish committee rooms, and there were about four or five people there. Amongst them was an old man, nearly 70, by the name Moch-heim Mankovsky[ph]. I don't know whether you have read much about the ghetto?

Yes.

In fact I had a chat with Martin Gilbert about two or three years ago, and I said to him, 'Mr Gilbert, I wouldn't say I read but I looked through all the books you wrote about the Holocaust. You are always mentioning the ghetto in Lodz which was the longest ghetto, and where one would expect that you write half the book about the ghetto, and you just write a few lines. Would I be right in saying that the best history [INAUDIBLE]?' He said yes.

Other historians have written quite a bit.

Not even one per cent would have covered it[??].

Oh yes, yes, a lot more still can be written, yes.

I always, I have said many many times, I hope that in my lifetime I will not see someone who writes a book actually in the ghetto, and how it worked, and what happened there, by our people against us. I hope nobody writes it. I don't know whether you have read it or not, it's a book that came out about a year ago in America, it took me over a year to get it in town, in Wiltshires[??] I think it was, they wanted to give me the money back a dozen times, but I said no, try try and try, and they finally got it. It's called 'The Chronicle of the Ghetto of Lodz'.

Ah, no, I haven't read it, no.

The only thing is, it starts a year later there, instead of '40, '41. The diary wasn't kept until '41. And if you feel you want to read it I will let you have it and you will see, and that will tell you.

Lovely, right. So you go back to your story of...

So they came in, and they said, 'Where is the Alteste Juden?' This old man, not knowing German, when they said the Alteste, he took it as the oldest, and he was the oldest there, so then yes, he put his hand up, he is the oldest, and, 'What is your name?' 'Romkovsky'[ph]. 'What is your position in the community?' He is the head of the Hedanovik[ph] orphanage, which was the largest orphanage in the world, and he was the father of the orphanage. And he says all right, fine, a prominent man, all

right. So they said, 'From now on....' and that's from the [INAUDIBLE], 'you are in the charge of the Jews in Lodz, and we give you orders and you carry them out'. They had done this everywhere, that was standard, except the small places where they took charge, and so otherwise that was their way of doing it. It's amazing, even in the towns where there were Poles, they would have a Pole giving orders to Poles, a Russian giving orders to Russians, and that's how they worked, and it worked, oh it worked all right. So they always had a Jew in charge of a Jew. Unfortunately he made a good job for them, all the way, all the way. And from then on he was in charge. He gave instructions, he surrounded himself by his police.

How did people become part of the police?

They had volunteers.....

End of F2913 side B

F2914 Side A

[INAUDIBLE] come up to the police, and plenty of volunteers. And of course after this Romkovsky, decide well, is it right or not. The amazing of it was, it was either one or the other, either one extreme or the other. They were either what you call here the [INAUDIBLE], the real rough ones, or intellectuals. And to this day I can't understand why. And amongst them one or two very very orthodox. But the average person stayed away, the middle of the road; the average person couldn't do it, no. Only from the extreme.

Did you know anyone that became [INAUDIBLE]?

Oh yes, yes, oh yes. I haven't met anyone after the war, because I don't think they would dare show their face anyway. Quite a lot of them went to Australia funnily enough, kapos, police in ghettos and so on went there. They all had the same idea, that they would go the other end of the world, nobody would find them. What they didn't realise, and I believe that they caught quite a few of them, they recognised them, what they didn't realise, that it would finish up that more than half of the Jewish community in Australia are Holocaust survivors. Yes, that's a fact. But there were so many of them had that same idea, go to the other end of the world, they won't find us!

Right. So they began to organise the Jews?

That's when it all began, that's how it began, and that's how it was in every part, every part. Most, like you had the Cherenkov[ph] family in Warsaw, which again we saw, where these Glagel[ph] was, the family, Glagel[ph] was a family. When the Germans asked him for a hundred thousand, supply him a hundred thousand people, and he knew very well that they are going to go to Treblinka, he says all right, I will do it. He went home and himself, his wife and the two daughters committed suicide and that's it. The same happened in the ghetto in Lvov, most ghettos, except in Lodz, except in Lodz.

Yes. So when you say, you know you were telling me that people were coming into the ghetto during those months and were allocated places, was that the Jewish police that were telling them...?

Oh yes, who were in charge, they allocated, they took them in when they came in, said, 'Right, there is an empty room, right, how many are there of you? Eight, nine, ten, here's the room'. And that's it.

Did they have special sort of identification, the Jewish police?

No. The Jewish police? Oh yes, a band.

What kind of band?

It was a band with the 'Judenpolizei', Jewish police, which you will see, the other two books there, it's [INAUDIBLE] in the ghetto. [INAUDIBLE] Grossman[ph], who lives in Tel Aviv now, he took photographs in the ghetto, and hidden in the place in

the ghetto in a basement somewhere, and he survived and he went back and this Grossman[ph], and these are the photographs which are being used over the world now.

So no one was allocated to your room?

No.

You weren't disturbed?

No. No we were left there. And this went on until the 1st of May, and promptly on the 1st of May the ghetto was sealed off. Barbed wire all the way round the whole ghetto. There were about a quarter of a million people there then. And all around barbed wire and every fifty yards a watchtower with an SS soldier there, and on the corner, our street, where the fence was [INAUDIBLE], there in the corner was a watchtower there.

What had you been doing during the day, during this time, up to the point of the ghetto being sealed?

Nothing.

What had you been doing?

Nothing. We were just taken to work. They came in, arrived all over the city. When they needed a hundred people, five hundred people, just rounded up, took them to work, brought them back at night.

What, the Jewish police did that?

Well the Jewish police helped the Germans to come in and show them and go around, and they helped them. But it wasn't the Jewish police only. From the minute the ghetto closed, May the 1st, was a hundred per cent Jewish authority, a hundred per cent, yes.

I see. So were you taken out of the ghetto to work in the city?

No.

You were never taken. Did you before the ghetto was closed?

Before the ghetto...I was taken out, yes.

Yes. What kind of work did you have to do?

Mainly cleaning streets, pulling down buildings brick by brick, and then also clearing out homes where the Jews left; parcelling up the clothes, putting... All sorts, anything which was decent just loaded it on trains and off to Germany. This happened everywhere.

And were you able to bring anything back into the ghetto with you?

Not at all.

No, you weren't able to pocket a few things, or...?

No no no. No chance, no. Plus you didn't dream of it, no, just didn't think about it. And then of course when the ghetto closed, then the fun started. The Germans started sending in, well, it looked a lot, trucks with vegetables and flour and all sorts, but obviously when they started to distribute it wasn't such a lot. And also they distributed, when they sent in, they sent in so much per head, but they didn't allocate that the Jewish policemen should have four or five times as much than the average resident of the ghetto. So by the time they took off theirs there wasn't much left for us. We had Jewish schools for children there established. Even Jewish courts. Post office, everything. It was like a Jewish state, it was like a typical Jewish state.

Where would you go for the food? Were there particular points where...?

You were appointed to places where you went with your ration card, and you got so much per head of everything, so much a week.

What did you get, what kind of things, you know, did you get on your ration?

Well bread, some flour, salt, sugar - well sugar, I don't know what it was, it was like..you could..it was like malter, very wet, dark, very raw. You only got very very little. It sounded better than it was. Occasionally, occasionally some horse meat, very seldom. Occasionally dried fish, very occasionally. And then this artificial egg powder, everything was artificial. Margarine; whether it was margarine or not we will never know, called it margarine. Coffee which was made from roasted grain, called it coffee. And that's it. And then of course they set up the workshops. This is where history will maybe one day decide in this respect whether this Romkovsky[ph] was more right[??] than Chernikov[ph] in Warsaw, or not. Where Chernikov[ph] didn't concentrate on setting up industry - just a little bit, not much. Well this Romkovsky[ph] in this respect he was very clever, very shrewd. He set up industry to such an extent that the Germans relied on it, and they had to keep us there, and give us some food as well to survive to be able to work. If he would have done the same what this Chernikov[ph] did, they would not have kept us from May 1st into August 1944, they would have got rid of us one by one much sooner, like they did in Warsaw. That I am convinced. In this respect he was a clever man, no question about it. I mean the fact is, it's only a guess really, a guess percentage-wise of how many survivors, really the average survivors is no more than about three to three and a half per cent. Those who lived in the ghetto and managed to stay there from May 1st to August, like I did, the average is about six per cent of survivors, almost double. And so it is...it's something which we will...as I say, I won't be able to judge it, but what stories we will make out of it in the future, I don't know. I wish they would do it, but while I am still around, yes, while I'm still around, but I don't think they will. It will take a lot longer to study all this, and take many many years, maybe fifty years or more. But one day, maybe in your days you may read about it in fifty years' time,

who was right and who was wrong. It's just the manner how he did it, the manner how he did it. Right across the road from us, (I tried to look for the street but I realised they replanned the whole area did the Poles, and that street, Jacoba[ph], or Jacob Street, is not there any more), on the corner was before the war a big store of wood, a wood mill, massive place, and they used this as one of the places to unload vegetables; potatoes were the most...what do you call it...I don't know what it's called in English, a big vegetable, it's hard like a rock. Turnip I think, turnip yes, turnip was one of the favourite foods that they gave us, yes, and the soup we had was with turnips, and the ration was turnips, everything was turnips. And they sent in loads of it. Again it was a lot because they kept it, otherwise there wouldn't be. I remember once, there were so many people there, so much bread, so many tons of everything, you know, and the stuff started to smell, rotten and smelling. It was already May, towards the end of May, and Romkovsky's[ph] administration refused to distribute it. Whether they were frightened that in case the Germans stopped, they didn't know exactly what they were going to [INAUDIBLE], and they wanted enough for their own administration, and therefore the whole thing collapsed. So say, to hell with everybody, as long as we are all right. Again we will never know, but they kept it. And it was right, directly opposite. This was one of them, it was all around us, a massive place and it covered the whole city, all the old city of Lodz, that's where the ghetto was. It may say in the book, I don't know how many square kilometres it was. And so we decided, enough is enough, we were hungry, we didn't get any food; a little bit of bread but that's all. So we came out in the streets and started to tear down the fence, the borders there, and helping ourselves. Well, he got frightened, this Romkovsky[ph], and what does he do, he came in and he got in touch with the Gestapo. Of course the Gestapo had a headquarters in the ghetto, [INAUDIBLE] the Gestapo, and the Kripo, which was in short, it was known as the Kriminalpolitzei, the criminal police. But we didn't see them, no, we hardly saw them. We hardly saw a German, no. The Jewish police took their place. So we realised it's getting out of hand, so we got in touch with the Gestapo and the Gestapo came in the open cars, and the middle of all the convoy there, he was there standing in an open car, and just shooting out with machine-guns, hundreds and hundreds of people killed, and dispersed everyone and that's it. A few days after, started to share, to give it out, but it was all rotten already. And these are the sort of things where, he was a devil on one side and brilliant and a genius on the other side. He had two personalities that man. I remember only[??] there was the Lutenyetska[ph] Street, again I show you the town in the old part. You see the ghetto was the main street, Eskerska[ph], which you will see on the photographs, I will show you, two parts, and that street was the main street which was the road towards Warsaw. If you wanted to go from Berlin to Warsaw you had to pass that street, which was the centre of where the ghetto was. So the street was all blocked off, and a bridge to go over from one part of the ghetto to the other. And the [INAUDIBLE] to Lutenyeska[ph], there must have been probably 41 or 2, and they were all big these, you know the large...you have on the Continent these big blocks with the front doors and you go inside there's a courtyard, it's where people live. Two or three of these big buildings, from one of the buildings, because he went round on a drozhki[??], you know what a drozhki[??] is? And that's how he went round, with this chauffeur-driven drozhki[??] with two beautiful horses and this black drozhki[??]. In fact the man became younger by the day, beautifully dressed. And he thrived on it and he really believed that what he was doing was right, which probably he did, to a large extent he did. Oh he was right what he did. But I'm convinced what

he did he was right, but I am also convinced half of the terrible things he[??] turned out, he did, when he gave orders to do, and his police, and [INAUDIBLE], there was no need for it, there was no need for it. There was no need to be as ruthless as he was. So, as he passed in this drozhki[??], so somebody from the fifth, sixth floor threw down a pot plant, and it just missed him. Within minutes the Gestapo was there and evacuated all the three buildings, took them all away and never saw daylight, and there you are. And these are the sort of things. Oh he didn't hesitate. Informed the Gestapo, this and this happened, they went in, right, that's it, nobody did it again.

Was he married, did he have a wife?

He wasn't married, or he was married and his wife died I don't know. He became so obsessed with power, he picked a woman of about 40, a very prominent woman, I forget her name, a doctor, and she had to marry him. Yes, someone to marry. She couldn't say no. He picked out the nicest girls, all university graduates, beautiful girls, and he opened like a special kitchen for his elite to eat there, and they were in charge, they served, so that they had the nicest girls. We used to call them the 'kolatzina girls'[ph]; the 'kolatzia'[ph] was in Polish evening dinner. They were serving the evening dinner, so they were... We will come to it later, I finished up working with them, and there was quite a number of them who, I know them now in different parts of the world, I met them after the war, and so on.

Where did he live, what kind of place did he live in?

Oh he had a very beautiful home. Sure he lived in comfort all right. His brother was in charge, he was a big chief; he gave his brother a job. All his family had good jobs, and that was Mottheim Romkovsky[ph]

So you say he set up industry and work.

Yes, every kind of industry, apart from bombs and bullets and so on, which they wouldn't trust us; that had to be under German supervision. And they made sure that no German supervises any industry, only Jews. Jewish instructors, everything, Jewish administration. There was no German in any industry. From uniforms. I mean I started off in 1940 making overshoes made of straw, plaited straws and sew around, made a shoe. They knew already in 1940 that they were going to invade Russia, and they may need these for the Russian winter, they may need these overshoes, boots made from straw to keep the feet warm. But by 1941 or 2, maybe '42, I was transferred already to a leather factory where we made all goods...well again it was harnesses for the horses, these belts for the soldiers with the...each soldier in the war he's got a little spade he's got to carry, a cover for the spade.

Starting off with the...so the first work that you had to do was these overshoes. And how did you get...I mean what happened, how did you get sort of taken into that? How was that organised?

How do you mean?

Well I mean up until then you hadn't been working and you had been, you know, you had sort of not been doing very much; the ghetto was sealed off, and...

They would just come in, they would say, 'Right, we want five thousand Jews'. They would take them out from the ghetto. It's like there were ten thousand Jews working for about two years dismantling or taking down these big houses outside the ghetto where the biggest Jewish stores were. Where now, I showed Tanya, we stayed in that street, we were in the hotel, then now they're all big gardens, parks. Yes, it's all open.

So they come in and say they want so many Jews for work outside the ghetto?

Yes, yes.

And is that how you were taken?

Yes, yes. But after, we all stayed in; very few were taken out. After, any work outside they used the Poles.

So when did that happen? I mean up to what point did you work [INAUDIBLE]?

I would say by 1940, some time in 1940 it stopped, and we started really working inside.

So these overshoes, were you doing that inside?

Oh yes, oh inside. They had taken over the biggest places, the biggest rooms. But they had a lot of big mills, right across [INAUDIBLE], my father worked where they built the main, big tailors factory, they made all the uniforms. Thousands of people worked in that, on uniforms. I mean they brought in the, where my mother worked it was, I think my two sisters worked there as well I'm sure, I forget already, in a laundry where they brought in from the frontiers the the uniforms full of blood, also to clean them. Of course the laundry was a massive industry there; from all over they brought tens of thousands of uniforms for cleaning and send them out again. Anything you could possibly think of, it was there.

Did you volunteer to work in the shoe place?

Oh no no no, you were sent; they just came, and they had... Of course what they did, they made like an index of all the people, a registrar[ph] side[??] of all the people who worked, who [INAUDIBLE] eventually the ghetto, because you had to be registered because you got a ration card, so automatically you were registered. And they just allocated. Oh it was, it worked, it worked like a factory all right. We had our money.

And you were paid?

Paid, paid we were, but what we got for the money was another story! No. But again, we got a ration, which was, you couldn't live, you couldn't die from it. Very very, next to nothing. But if you worked you got a soup; not much of a soup. We

counted. If you had...one said I've got four pieces of these vegetables, another said I have two, and if you were lucky you had one little square of meat, another had nothing, but it was a soup, it was hot. And then, again a very clever thing what they had done, again [INAUDIBLE] the Jews have done it, this administration. If you...we worked obviously seven days a week.

So there was no time off at all?

No no, no. If you were not absent for a week, by the end of the week you got what they say in German is called a Talon, which is an extra ration, and for that you went into a special part, a special, not just the ordinary place where they issue the rations, and you got some extra food, if you worked a whole week. If you were off one day in that week you did not get a Talon. So, by working you got a soup there, you got this Talon if you didn't miss a day. You know when you have very very little, a spoonful means a lot.

Yes. What did you get for the Talon? What kind of thing?

Food. The same as what was on the rations, this was additional. What they take home, yes, they take home.

And you say you received sort of some payment for the work.

Well you had to pay, for the rations you had to pay. Yes, for the Talon] you had to pay.

I see, yes. So did that use up all the money that you had earned?

Yes, oh yes.

So there was never any money left over.

And then, also it was within the ghetto, people would sell the bread for sugar, because if somebody got ill, they needed a bit extra sugar, he couldn't eat the bread, so they sold it. You see this is how the trade went.

Yes, sort of the black market inside the ghetto.

Yes, a black market within.

Within, yes. So what kind of hours did you work?

Twelve hours.

From when till when?

From six in the morning, or was it ten hours perhaps, I don't remember to be honest. It was long hours, but we didn't mind, we didn't mind. We were better off when we were at work, especially where I worked, dry, light, and in the winter it was warm; we

didn't want to go home. You go home it's cold, dark, miserable, what you go home for? Oh working, again you had to be lucky where one worked. I was fortunate. Looking back, I had a little bit of luck with me all the way. Now I was transferred to this leather factory, where we did all these harnesses and so on from leather...

Why had you been transferred?

They stopped making the boots, and then they realised they needed more of the other, so they took people to make whatever they needed most. And because my German language was reasonably good, I was asked...I don't remember to this day how I was chosen to be honest, that's after when they brought these dollybirds, these special girls, they closed down that kitchen, and they brought them in to this factory, and it was a big room, there was a very very long room but they divided it into two. Forty girls in one group, forty in the other, and we taught them how to do these things. And then the manager of the factory, also another Lithuanian Jew; this Romkovsky was a Litvak[ph], a Lithuanian Jew, a Litvak[ph], this was another Litvak[ph]. Because again, it gave him friends and his...his landsmen, well he gave them all jobs, oh yes, it was all jobs for the boys. But anyway, his name was Wasser[ph], so he was the manager in charge of the whole factory, hundreds and hundreds of people worked there. And I don't remember exactly how it happened, somebody asked me would I take charge of collecting the raw material from the stores, distributing it, and then making sure that I have got the right amount, and they take it back to the stores. Of course it was valuable stuff this, it was leather; we didn't have any soles or anything, people used to put it on their shoes when they wore the soles out. Oh it was valuable stuff. So, of course for that we got an extra soup.

Because it was a responsible...

Yes, it was a responsible job. I had nothing to do with the training or teaching, nothing at all. And so I was called the [INAUDIBLE], which means in charge of the distributing the work and so on to the group, looking after the workmen. But the...what do you call, the instructor, was in the same room, and he's alive, in fact he came to Tanya's wedding, from Tel Aviv. His wife, who is now his wife, she worked under me, and under him as well, yes, and he married her, he met her after the war and married her. Nice girl. And, his name is Hirschenbaum[ph] and he was the instructor. On the other side was somebody by the name of Saushigrin[ph], and we all knew her and she was a very nice, charming woman, and this friend, Hauovitch who lives in Brussels. I must say, if anything, if you can say you had a good time, so that was a good time while I worked there. We were all young people, there were all intelligent young women, young girls.

End of F2914 Side A

F2914 Side B

....last time that you worked seven days a week and it was something like ten hours a day, when you were working.

Yes.

Was ever any time given, half a day or any time given?

No.

No, that was a constant thing. What happened when people were ill, what kind of treatment, or what happened to people when they fell ill?

In the beginning, the first two years, one or two years, we had doctors, we had a hospital in the ghetto, and, well, to the best of whatever drugs they had and so on, they were treated. And as it went on, till about 1942, when all this really came to an end, and when you were ill you either recovered by yourself, or you didn't. It happened, you see that book, I will bring it another day, and you will see how it progressively, day by day, from about the end of '41, the beginning of '42, how it got worse and worse and worse.

Yes. I've got a series of questions to do with the diary of the ghetto, so I'll come on to those in a minute. I'm just sort of asking more general questions about... I mean did you ever have any cause to, you or your family, go to the hospital while it was still there, or have a doctor?

No, funnily not as far as I can remember, no, I don't think so. We just didn't think, oh, I'm not well I had better go and see a doctor, it didn't work that way. And then there's another thing, you knew you dare not be off a day because you will lose the soup during the day and that extra ration. That's why somehow everybody was fit and well, until they died, until they got some sort of illness and died.

Was there much illness around?

Oh yes, oh yes, yes. All sorts of disease, all sorts, which we didn't really know, people died like flies. Again it's a pity, you will have to read that book, it will tell you exactly, exactly, you will have a full picture. It's a pity that the diary only starts from '41, not '40.

Yes.

But it's enough.

Did people try at all to gather for any kind of, you know, occasion? I mean was there any gatherings maybe for Yom Kippur?

In the first time, in that book it will show you the turn[??], I showed Tanya, on the street where we lived, on Franschiskanska, there was an old...well it was a small

cinema, and they allowed to turn[??] this until 1940, the first Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur they allowed to have a shul. You see there was one German civilian by the name Bibov, BIBOV. The rumours went round that he is supposed to have been some relative of Hitler. He was the number one German in charge of the ghetto. Through him all the others came, this Romkovsky[ph], and [INAUDIBLE], but I forgot to tell you the other day about Bibov, he was the one, he was right through the ghetto from beginning to end. When we come after, the end here, I will describe to you the famous speech that Bibov made.

I'm going to ask you about it! That's a bit further on.

That's already August 1944.

That's right.

But Bibov was the only one who quite readily toured the ghetto, came into those factories, and he was the one. And actually when he came in he was always surrounded by Gestapo men, but always, he was like a household name. The order of Bibov, and Bibov was everything.

So you say, coming back to this cinema, and in 1940 they actually allowed, what, for Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur.

Yes.

Now what happened in subsequent years?

Well just they stopped it.

They didn't allow it. So in '41...

Well, they gave us a treat, as simple as that. It was so, for their own satisfaction. It's only on the instructions of Bibov. He was, in his way, a very very shrewd, very smart fellow. He worked, he ran that ghetto to perfection. He worked together with this Romkovsky[ph], and they ran it. If they would put in the most highest official from the SS or Gestapo they couldn't possibly have made a better job of it than this Bibov and Romkovsky[ph] Yes, it worked, it worked.

So I mean, was there any....so you say, 1941 there was nothing to mark sort of the high holy days?

I'm almost sure it was only one, 1940, which again, the 'Chronicle of the Ghetto' will describe it. You will even see placards in Yiddish on the photograph there, outside the synagogue, this thing is the cinema where they allowed the shul.

Did Jews try to meet secretly at all?

Yes, yes. There was a time when it was really bad, already coming to '42, and secretly we sent a message to Romkovsky[ph], if we would stage an uprising what

would be... Or, what we wanted, would he keep out of it. And the warning was, don't you dare. So we just couldn't do anything, couldn't do anything.

Who was part of that secret sort of...?

A lot of young people. For instance, where I worked was all, the whole factory, the whole where we worked, not just my own group, were all these intelligent girls, but in general, for some reason all young people there, most of them university graduates. We did our share; I would say to a large extent, one can only, I needn't say...considering the circumstances, while we worked we had a good time. Hungry and so on, but a good time. Because all of the same type of people, the same element, the same group of people. I mean if anything happened on the frontier, or any changes in, military changes or whatever happened, when we arrived at, I think it was seven o'clock it must have been, by five past seven we knew exactly what happened. No radio, no newspaper, nothing was allowed, nothing was permitted.

How did you know?

We had a radio which, we only needed half a dozen people to know, and within an hour everybody in the ghetto knew, all the factories.

Do you know who had the radio?

Yes, I had a good idea who it was, couldn't say the name; but officially we didn't know, but we guessed who it was. We didn't know. Like, you have a man, this Grossman[ph] who took all the photographs, what I've got a book, 'The Camera in the Ghetto', well there you are, now you find out he went round secretly taking photographs. And he I'm more than positive had a radio. We had several, we had, we knew exactly. I remember when they opened the Third and the Second Front, on the 6th of June 1944, within minutes we came in with great delight, the Second Front has been opened. Naturally immediately we took it like tomorrow there would be freedom. And the slightest bit of information like this, we thought that's it, the end is there.

So was it amongst this group that a secret meeting was sort of...?

Oh yes. Oh, they just came, this and this would happen, that's it. And we knew, we knew all the time. The amazing of it is, even in the camp later on, we found out, we knew, we knew exactly what was happening on the frontier, it's amazing.

But you know you were talking about sending a message to Romkovsky[ph]. Now who organised that? Was that within your work?

No. Again it's something which I...people like this...got involved with this Grossman[ph], and some, probably...more than a handful, maybe three or four or five people would know that already there was danger, there was a risk.

So did you know at the time that that had happened?

Oh we knew, oh we knew, because the rumours went round right away.

But you weren't involved in that sort of...?

No, no, I didn't get that far; I would have loved to, now, looking back on it, to be involved, yes. I was involved in a few things but I wasn't involved with that.

What, in the ghetto?

Yes.

What kind of things, come on, tell me!

I mean we...see again this is something which, he was a genius in that respect. On one side a villain on the other side a genius. Children who were too young to work were sentenced to death, that is all over, everywhere, and the ghetto was no exception. So he organised what was called, Polish it was called a [INAUDIBLE], which was a young group. In fact there is one here, you will probably come across him, Sam Gontash[ph], when you interview him, he worked in our, what we called the [INAUDIBLE], that was the name for it. The zord[ph] was an industry or a factory in Germany. And he was only young and small, that was the problem, because nobody was asked to produce a birth certificate, or a passport and this. By the look, oh, he looks 15, oh he can work, he is old enough to work. He could have been 10, he looks 15. Or somebody who was 16 he looked 12, he's still young, right, take him away, as simple as that. So they organised these youth groups, but he, this Romkovsky[ph] he organised it. Of course always was working together with this Bibov. And to get the soup and to get this extra ration they had to produce a certain amount of production, otherwise they couldn't have it, for the fact they were younger it didn't matter. I remember one time there was a youth group on the same street, on the Wagonyitska, the same street where our factory was, was a tailor's factory, making uniforms, and they had a very large youth group there. And naturally they couldn't make the production, they were children, 10, 11 years of age, 12 probably top. So the manager of this factory was a Jew, he said, 'A drop in the production, you don't get the soup today.' So, in ours, which was maybe a hundred yards from that factory where we were, when we got the soup we managed with buckets, [INAUDIBLE], and everybody gave a spoonful of that soup in there, and smuggled it in, smuggled it in to that tailor factory, so the children had a soup.

Is that when you were working on the leather belts? Not the overshoes?

No, the overshoes was gone, yes. So, I remember I was the one who helped to organise this here, and we ate, we gave them, and obviously, if you don't have anything, you see if you're hungry, one spoonful was a hell of a lot of food, a hell of a lot of food.

Yes. What happened to them eventually?

They carried on, they started to work a bit more, or they changed their mind. But very often, was transports were going out from the ghetto all the time. Again that

book will...which, I will bring it in today. There was always ten thousand, five thousand, one thousand; there was hardly a week, hardly a day where they took them out, and then they brought in from all the neighbouring cities from around there, they brought into the ghetto. I mean the turnover of people was unbelievable. From those who started on May the 1st in the ghetto, not a large percentage like myself went through from May 1st to August '44; most of them were all newcomers. Like this Hirschenbaum[ph], the one who is married now, she came, also she was a young girl, I remember a pretty young girl, she came from a place, [INAUDIBLE] which is maybe 50, 60 kilometres from Lodz. Took out all the young people, brought them into the ghetto. Because people died, they died off, and then they always sent out so many to other places, or quite simply to keep the extermination camps going, keep them working, so they needed people, so here you had a ready made group of people, so they came. So to keep the industry going so they brought in new people from other places.

Yes. What else were you involved in? You said you were involved in a couple of things.

Just general discussions and...you see you had to be careful, you didn't know...unfortunately against our own people I had to be careful. You didn't know who was listening, who was going to do you a favour; people were hungry, they thought, well, they heard something of somebody, they would go to the Kripo, which was the Kriminalpolizei, and they would get a bread, get a loaf of bread, they would do it. It's difficult...it was difficult to keep sane, very difficult, especially in the ghetto when you were living around... There were rows between the children and parents, because when they gave a loaf of bread for so many people, that's all right, you take it home and you divide it, so much for every one. And the number of rows, the number of fights there were amongst families was unbelievable. You got, mine is not the same portion as yours. It was not easy, not easy. You see in some ways the advantage we had in the ghetto, we were still the family, and still slept in a bed, but the disadvantage was, to be with a family and under these circumstances to look at one another and so on, see how the father suffered or the mother or a sister or a brother, it wasn't...in this respect, well, it was not easy, it was not easy. So there was a lot for, a lot against being together. All right, fortunately in my family we had no quarrels or nothing, we managed, we pulled together, we managed the best we could. In fact each time we divided the rations, when we brought home once a week, so the four of us, myself, two sisters and my mother took a teaspoonful of sugar, a teaspoonful of this, of that, and increased my father's ration.

Oh really!

Yes, oh yes, always did, always. And always made sure we cut off the...divided, if it was a round bread, divided into portions so his was maybe half an inch bigger than ours.

Gosh, yes.

And we did it, we did it all the time.

My goodness.

And very often in addition, my mother would take an extra teaspoonful of sugar and put it in as well. And whether there were many families like that or not, I don't know, I don't know. We had more the other way. The fighting within the family over this, then that was all part and parcel of the system, and they knew it, they knew this would happen. Otherwise they could very easily have cut the bread into portions and right, five people here's five portions. Oh no, no, they said no, we will give it all, five people; if there was say ten gramme of sugar per week per person, so five people, five grammes of sugar, fifty grammes of sugar or whatever, there it is, share it out and fight over it. Oh yes. This is what, the German word for it is 'planmassig', I don't know whether you know it. 'Planmassig' means systematically. Everything was a system. 'Planmassig', everything works to a system, everything with a reason. Well that was their famous word, 'Planmassig'.

Were you able to make anything out of the ration, cook them or...?

Yes yes yes, always got some flour as well. The meals, the concoctions what our mothers made up was unbelievable, there were all sorts. We got [INAUDIBLE], we got...whatever was available. In the winter we didn't get it, there was no potatoes available in the winter because, well if they would bring it, it was frozen. Very often they gave us the vegetables and potatoes in the winter and know very well it was frozen, and as soon as we take it home it would all be water, but they gave it.

And what would your mother make? Do you remember what kind of things she would do with the...?

Soups mainly, mainly soups, that's all.

Did she have fuel to cook with?

That's a good question. We got occasionally some wood or whatever. I know why it is[??], I've got a special [INAUDIBLE], I didn't think of it[??], I just remember now. Fuel was simply...hardly anyone had a wardrobe, it was always just simply, tore the boards up from the floor, and the furniture, and cooked with that. Went round some wasteground and tried to find bits of coal or whatever. It was difficult, cooking was difficult. Heating didn't exist, heating in the winter didn't exist. No, just had to...that's why very often, I mean myself I was dreading to go home, because at least it was bright, it was lively where we worked, but going home during the winter, all you do is put another coat and another sweater on, and that's all.

Did you used to go out yourself looking for fuel?

Oh yes, oh yes, on wastelands, everybody did, everybody did. And somehow we found, we found.

Can you describe to me, you know, like a typical day at this point in the ghetto, you know, just sort of try and sort of go through a day so that I get a picture of, just like a day in the life.

Well you had to be...of course there wasn't such a thing as having breakfast, no, there wasn't... Most people would have got a ration for a week, for seven days or eight days, whatever, and in two days the bread was gone. Fortunately in our family we had some willpower, and the ration we got for the seven days, split it in seven, and we always managed to get a small slice of bread, and that was the breakfast. A hot drink, sometimes we did, sometimes not, depending whether we had the fuel to boil the water, or keep it to make something in the evening. Most times it wasn't. And then, walk to work, some further to walk than others, because it was a very large area the ghetto. And quite often one was so weak that to walk a distance was not easy. And then, that's it, as soon as you got there, seven o'clock you started work; twelve o'clock they brought the soup. Of course where I was, this [INAUDIBLE] there, there was a woman from the office, a Jewish woman of course, well she came around and gave the little tickets for the soup, she handed out. But - in fact only for Rosh Hashonah, I was there, when I was there with my wife, in Tel Aviv, when we went to this memorial service, for the first time I met this woman who handed out, yes, we recognised each other, first time I saw her since '44. And she used to go around. She was a very nice woman, very nice. She used to come to me and say well, how many[??] present? There were decent people as well you know, not all were villains. Unfortunately there were not many but there were some. Knowing very well that, there was always somebody, out of 40 there was hardly a day when everybody was present, and she left it to me, and I said yes, everybody is here, and I think she gave me 40 of these tickets, and I handed them out. I then, invariably I had already a message, 'I cannot come, my father is dying', 'my mother is dying', and try and make the[??] present and keep soup for yourself. The odd time, I did keep it, knowing who it was, where the brother or the father was a big chief, and they were not short of food, or had more than we did, so I said all right; but the 99 per cent, I met quite a number after the war, where I sent the soup home, whoever lived near and I sent it home with them. I'm not saying many did it, but I did it. And looking back now, I'm happy I did it.

If the people weren't there to collect their own soup, how did you get that soup for the person?

Yes.

What, you got more than one?

Naturally, if they say...if I handed out 39 tickets, and the person who wasn't present I had one ticket left, I could collect as many soups as I had tickets. I tell you the number of times very often I took the soup, and sent it home. Oh this happened very often, very often.

Did you used to drink the soup in the factory?

Oh yes, yes. There wasn't such a thing as having a half an hour or an hour lunch, you just had the soup and you carried on, there was no lunch break.

Did people actually slip out then, you know, for a little while? I mean you say like you sent the soup home.

No no, only at night, when we went home from work.

I see, right, no.

No, couldn't do it.

No.

I mean, I took a risk very often, I mean lucky enough I didn't get into trouble. Because very often the manager would come in, have a spot check, it happened all the time, yes, it happened all the time. And the odd occasion when I realised, well, there's somebody missing, and he's coming, so somehow we managed to get from another group to come and take their place, and then when as he finished, as he went out he went into the other room. Oh yes, we were prepared for it, we were prepared for it.

So that was your soup at lunchtimes.

Yes, we carried on till it came time to go home, about six o'clock or seven, I can't remember any more. Then we went home, and that was when the misery started, yes. It was no joy to go home. The summer wasn't too bad, the summer wasn't too bad I must say. At least you weren't cold. Just hungry but not cold, where in the winter we had both, which was worse at times, the cold was even worse than the hunger. No, the summer wasn't too bad at all. But in the ghetto we could walk around free, nobody bothered us. After work we could walk around.

What would you used to do?

Well we had people we knew, friends, we walked to others, but it didn't happen a lot. I mean once it went dark you were just frightened to go out, whether you were allowed to or not, you just didn't do it.

And would your mother sort of cook a little something for you when you got home?

When we came home, yes. Yes always she would...she cooked, she was the best[?]. Of course the biggest treat was, very very odd occasion when we had so many grammes per head of horse meat, well then of course she chopped it and made [INAUDIBLE], which is chopped meat anyway. Tasted good, it was good. The French eat horse meat, so I...

Yes, yes. Did you used to do anything to mark sort of like Friday night when you got home?

No, nothing.

Nothing.

Friday and Yom Kippur, just an ordinary day. No no no. We knew when it was, yes, we knew. It's amazing, even in the camps or in Auschwitz, everywhere, we knew, we knew when [INAUDIBLE] was; we worked it out, we worked it out by the moon, by...

So, I mean you were saying that the job that you were involved in, you were the one that used to collect the leather.

I collected the raw material and shared it out. In fact invariably there was hardly a day I didn't put in several hours waiting[??], there was always...they were all girls - well girls, I mean ladies, they were there doing the [INAUDIBLE], so I just went to their bench and [INAUDIBLE] and invariably it was hardly...myself and this Hirschenbaum[ph], the instructor, very often.....

End of F2914 Side B

F2915 Side A

There was one thing, after the war I was never worried in going around; I went round all over Europe, everywhere; wherever there were any Jews, even a handful, I was there, and met many one knew, and I never worried, because we had plenty of people who didn't behave themselves and they were a bit rough and ready and so on, and they got into trouble after the war when they were recognised. Well, I was welcome everywhere. One, I met her after the war, the first time I went back to Lodz she wanted to marry me! Yes. And I ran, and I've never stopped running since.

So what exactly did the work consist of? You say you used often to have to help out, what exactly were they doing?

Well when we took our parts, they were cut already, for harnesses, and young girls working these heavy harnesses, with what's called...a big pin it was, make a hole and then with laces to sew through. One lace one way, one the other way and then pulled it together. It was quite hard work, quite hard work. But then we started already easier work when it was the, like a cover for the little spade what these soldiers carried, so that was already easy. Still the same principle, like a bench where you put between these two boards, put that part for the cover of the spade and screwed it together with a tie, and then keep sewing it. When I worked on the horses, what do you call the...harnesses, from making the hole here, it was like a board, so hard, very very hard, and they were all girls working on it.

And how long did that go on for, how long were you with that factory?

Say...three, three and a half years.

Really? Yes, what, from '41 was that?

Yes, yes.

And was it more or less a fixed workforce, that the same people were together?

Yes, oh yes, yes.

Well they had to, because it took a lot of training.

Yes.

It was in their interest to have the same people doing the same job, because he got it more perfect. Everything had to be examined at the end, it had to be a hundred per cent, because when it went out to the Germans, wherever it went to, I mean they checked it, they checked it.

How were the people treated at work? I mean were you treated...how were you treated?

It depends how lucky one was, to which group you happened to be allocated. Where it was instructor and everybody around, and everybody...where I was in that long room, 40 in one and 40 in the other, and it was myself, this Herschenbaum[ph] and Zoschegrin[ph] and this Nehemobitch[ph], who is now in Brussels, we worked together as a team, as a family, and it was all right, it was all right. Some worse ones, it's as simple as that, and they could make life very difficult. Wanted to show their authority, and it was very difficult. The managerial staff could either make life easy or make hell out of life, and it happened very often, it was hell. The majority were easy, the majority was all right, but we had swine, even Jewish swines, plenty of them.

But where you worked you say...

We are in that floor where the 80 were, it was...if there is such a thing as we enjoyed while we worked, that was it, we enjoyed it. Oh yes, we made the best of it. Oh well these young women always...well, everybody was more left-wing minded and they used to sing all these international tunes, the communist international tunes, and I remember this Wasser[ph] when he heard it he came in and he screamed and shouted, he said, 'I will have to bring the Gestapo in to sort you out' and so on, he says, [INAUDIBLE]. The Gestapo members did go around in cars and up and down, nothing to do with looking after the ghetto, just going from industry to industry and so on, but they were always there, you could see them in the cars. They didn't need any permission to come in, and he was dead frightened, because they could very easily come in and take, if they would hear it, and take the whole lot, all these hundreds of people, maybe five, six hundred, and load them into cattle trucks and off you go, and never see daylight again, that's it. Oh, they could do, if they would have heard it they would have done it, and we knew it. But we didn't care, we still carried on. I mean I certainly didn't stop them, I joined in. That is where I learned all the international tunes, the national songs, which helped me in fact later on, it helped me a lot.

Gosh. Did anybody manage to smuggle in and out of the ghetto? Was there any going in and out?

Almost impossible, almost impossible, no. Just, from Warsaw ghetto it was somehow easier; you know how the ghetto was placed, with sewerage[??] and so on, but the way how our ghetto was placed, not really. Then it was the first ghetto which was closed, we didn't have a chance to sort ourselves out really, to find out what... I mean I can say only one revolt which we did carry out is when...I don't know whether it's the 5th of July, the 5th of August, but it will say in that book; I think it was the 5th of August, or the 5th of September it was, I think it was September, which was the most horrible, horrible experience which happened in the ghetto in the four years, four and a half years there.

What year was that?

That's 1942, I'm almost sure it was '42. The Germans decided that they are about 20,000 people made up of children up to the age of 10, 11, 12, and old and sick people, and they said to Romkovsky[ph] right, these are the people, and they reckoned there were 20,000 there, and we want you to bring us these 20,000 people.

An order came; you see, the orders always were posters all over the ghetto, put out, and any announcement, anything, there's always posters all over. And this and this day, which I think it was the 5th of September if I'm not mistaken, it was a week before Rosh Hashonah, and they came off the Lutemyevska[ph], which was like Victoria Station where the coaches come in in London, but from all over Poland, a very massive place where the coaches before the war came in there and they left from there for all over. And there must have been at least 20,000 people there, and then he arrived, this Romkovsky[ph], dressed with the high boots with the mattelic[ph] coat and everything, dressed like a lord. They had a rostrum for him with a microphone. And he started off, it was always in Yiddish, because he was a Ludvak[ph]. He started off with the words, 'Yieden bener ochmolis'[ph], 'Jews of mercy'. Then he says, 'Ein voch farrish Hashonah', a week before a Hashonah, I am asking you, '[YIDDISH]', I am asking you to give your child as a sacrifice. Well the scene there, that I will never forget, it was the most terrible terrible terrible scene, especially women tearing their hair out, screaming, shouting. Anyway he said that tomorrow morning his police will come round, street after street, building after building, and go around searching each building and taking away all these children, and we must not object. And they did, the following day they did, and that's the only time where we put a real positive revolt against him. Nobody would have...they came and people took out knives and all sorts, and went and started to fight the police. And after a day they went back and said no, we will never manage to do it. So, within minutes there were posters all over that as from tomorrow morning there is a curfew; nobody goes to work, nobody moves out from their homes until further notice. And then, the Gestapo along with the Jewish police came, they took out, started one area, and one building after another, most of them were the small buildings, so they took a whole street; if they were big buildings like where we lived, the courtyard, so, asked everybody to come down into the courtyard and line up. And then the Gestapo and the Jewish police went in, searched all the houses, and if anybody...they said, anybody who won't come down, automatically will be taken away. People did hide themselves of course, not many but they did. And they came down, and then they just...and it was a...I don't know how to put it. Well they sorted out whoever they felt is too old, or looks...children. So...they had trucks standing outside in the street and immediately took them out, on the truck, on the truck, on the truck.

Was that the first time something as big as this had happened?

On that scale, yes, yes; on that scale it was the most... And I said all the time, if I would say which moment was the horrifying moment in all the years in the ghetto, I would say that was it. And funnily enough, it's exactly the same how he describes it in that book. Well funnily enough, how it was, where we lived on the Franschischkanska, like on this street, one side of the...opposite side to where we lived, they finished say tonight, and we knew tomorrow morning they would start on our side. So I said to the family, I said look, if we see...let's take a chance, and we will look out, because there's only about 50 yards down was a guard. It was a curfew, not allowed to work. I said let's run across to the other side, we will hide ourselves overnight in a yard or anywhere, and then we won't have to stand the selection. Because that's what it was, it was a selection, who should die then and who should die later, who should be taken away and who not. And it's amazing, myself and my younger sister managed to get across. How we managed to get across without being

seen by the guard, and the streets were guarded very very closely, especially where it was, where one side was done the other side not, and we managed to get across. And my parents and older sister, they didn't follow us, and they stopped behind. And it was amazing, the following morning we could see how...we looked from the other side, from a window there, and we could see how the selecting, how the selection in our house, in our block. Anyway when they finished, we went back, and who was missing, my mother was gone. But ours was already towards the end, because it started at one end and ours was at the other end. In the same day the curfew was finished and that's it; they had their 20,000 - they probably took 40, we will never know, we will never know. And then, we found out where they were, which was on the assembly place, it was like a prison, a ghetto prison, [INAUDIBLE]. So of course these sort of things you don't...one never thinks in these sort of circumstances, whether you're doing the right thing or the wrong thing, you just do it and that's it, not realising it. Danger didn't come into it, because you get to a stage where danger doesn't count. So what, if I get killed I get killed and that's it you see. When you see what happens, so, you feel well, everything is lost in any case. I went to the [INAUDIBLE], to this assembly place, which was round a barbed wire, with a barbed wire fence, and who do I see right near the fence, was my mother. I cannot remember a single thing, how I managed to pull the wires apart and got her out, I just can't remember, my mind is completely a blank how I did it; it was barbed wire. Obviously I pulled it apart, for her to get out, and she climbed out. First how I undid the wires, pulled the wires apart, to get her out, and then how she went out, because it was guarded? And I took her back home. And we were together to August '44. I would love to remember how I did it, I can't remember a bit, no.

Incredible.

I probably didn't realise I was doing it, I just didn't realise.

My goodness. Did other people manage to escape?

I don't know, I never heard of anyone, never heard, no, never heard. There were plenty there I must say when I was there, to see anybody who were taken away, but there were so many. I was just lucky that my mother happened to be near that fence, otherwise, how can you go looking? There were so many thousands of people there, you couldn't do it.

So where did you spend the night when you managed to get across?

Just in a yard, in a courtyard there.

Were there other selections like that after that one [INAUDIBLE], or was that...?

Mainly what they did, whenever they wanted 1,500, 10,000 whatever, they always took them at night. We were always prepared, always listened, is there a knock at the door. I mean when we went to bed at night, nobody had any guarantee that they won't be taken out during the night, some because the children they were young, they [INAUDIBLE] to live. Others because they needed...they had an order. Say if any factory where they had slave labour, if they were short of a thousand men, so they

would call up to Bibov and say right, I need a thousand men to be sent there and there, and he would say to Romkovsky[ph], right, bring me a thousand men, and he bring it. Simple as that. Or if they felt, well the extermination places, well they needed some people to keep the place going, 'I want 5,000, bring me old people and children and so on'. So he gave them, all through the passing of a night.

When did you hear about the extermination camps, when did that...?

We didn't.

You didn't. You didn't know about...?

No no no. No, that's one thing we didn't know. We heard of all sorts, but extermination we didn't. It was very difficult because nobody ever came out from them. There's the odd one. I mean I've got...the last book what Martin Gilbert wrote, 'The Final Solution' I think it is.

'The Final Journey'.

Or 'The Last Journey', yes, 'The Final Journey'. Now there, he's got one about Izbicka[ph] under the heading 'Eyewitness', how a handful of them, about two or three ran away from Chelmno, which...but otherwise nobody came away, nobody came away.

So it never filtered in to the Lodz ghetto, what was happening.

No. We knew more what was happening on the frontier than in Auschwitz or Chelmno or Treblinka or Majdanek or any of these places, didn't know.

Didn't know.

No. You see they were so organised, the technique was so highly geared up with them, that they even... I mean we had a post, like [INAUDIBLE] husband Josef was the postman. Where did the post come from? People were taken away, they had cards and they made them sign, 'We're here, it's marvellous here, wonderful here', in the meantime they were already exterminated and sent in. And we got the cards, oh, fantastic. Yes.

Were you able to send anything out?

Oh yes, yes. Never got it, but we were able to post it, yes, oh yes. That was the post. This is how they were so...everything worked to such a fine art, it's almost hard to believe that the average human being should think of these things, how to exterminate the other people in such a systematic way. That was the post we had. Whether this Romkovsky[ph] knew or not, we will never know, we will never know. But we didn't. One thing we didn't know. Now looking back, how amazing that we didn't find out. We knew everything, and we didn't know that such a thing as Auschwitz existed, no.

You had not even heard the name?

No. Never heard anything. Otherwise I don't know what we would have done. I don't think we would have gone as easy as we did, at least at the very end.

And of course a few questions that I wrote down after I looked something up yesterday if I can ask you. This one's going back to 1939, because, you had been telling me how you used to, before the ghetto, how you used to pray in the great synagogue, and apparently that was burnt down.

Yes.

Do you remember that?

Oh yes.

Do you remember when that happened?

We only lived maybe 200 yards away. They dynamited it, that was round about Christmas time 1939.

'39, yes.

Round about that time. They tried to burn it down first, but it was so solid that it just, all they achieved was to burn down the woodwork and that's all. At the end they had to dynamite the whole building right round and collapsed it. I showed Tanya where it was, it's now a garden and a little [INAUDIBLE], and all sorts there, yes. The whole area is replanned.

Right. Also it said, from what I read that it was very common for there to be house searches, Jewish police or whatever coming in and searching for valuables.

Oh yes, oh yes.

Do you remember any incidents like that?

No they didn't come to us.

They didn't come to you?

Not to us, no. No, we didn't...we weren't faced with it. Of course and then again they had their informers. For that purpose they set up a headquarters for the Kripo, which was the Kriminalpolizei, which again Tanya knows exactly where it is, that spot, we went and I showed her. And they went in, there were plenty of informers from our own people unfortunately. And one by the name of David Gettler[ph], he collaborated with them, he was their main informer. And who has got valuables and so on, when they came, they brought them in and tortured them, nine out of ten never came out. But this David Gettler[ph], in his own way...there was a competition between him and Romkovsky[ph], they were at loggerheads, because he was part of

the Kripo and the other one was associated with the Gestapo. But I remember a case, he lived, after the war I found out, only about maybe 15, 20 years ago, that he lives in Munich, so I got a friend there, went to cheder with him, a friend: today he is a friend, before the war he was not a friend of mine, Wolf Gimpel[ph]. I phoned him up and I said to him, 'Have you got somebody by the name of David[??] Gettler[ph]?' 'Yes'. And I said, 'Who is he, what is he, what do you know about him?' Oh, he says, 'Fine Jew'. 'So what does he do?' Oh he says, 'He is like the go-between in the Jewish community in Munich. If there is any dispute or anything they go to David[??] Gettler[ph], and whatever he says goes'. He was like the rabbi of the town, yes, the good Jew of the town. So I said to him, 'Look, that man directly or indirectly has got tens of thousands of Jews on his conscience. I am prepared to come there, at my own expense, and if they put out a hundred like him I will recognise him.' So I told him what he did and so on. He went to the police and he told them. They said, 'All right, we'll let you know Herr Gimpel'. They phoned him up two or three days later, they said yes, your friend from England is right, he did collaborate with the Kripo; he was a villain, but they know all about him, but they cannot pinpoint, there is no evidence at all against him that he killed one person with his own hands, so therefore there is nothing we can do, because if we charge him we've got to charge 75 per cent of the German people, and that was the end of it. Fortunately he died of cancer about two or three years later, so at least he got something back.

Did you know personally anyone that was taken away by the Kripo and tortured?

Yes, yes yes. One of them is [INAUDIBLE]; he lives now in Miami, but he has been in our place many many times. Yes, in fact he came to Tanya's wedding, yes.

And he was one that came back?

He came out, but he's never been right ever since. No, he's mentally disturbed, and people many times, you know, laugh and him and say no, he's this, he's that, but I know, I keep saying, look I say, it's a miracle that he's alive, he was just...he could never be right once he come out from there, he couldn't. I don't know whether he's still alive now, I haven't seen him for about three or four years. Normally he is the one who always turns up, but he came to Tanya's wedding.

Must have been quite a gathering at Tanya's wedding.

Yes, yes, yes. This Herschenbaum[ph] was there, this [INAUDIBLE] from Belgium was there.

Now it says here... well you've mentioned this actually, that many people were deported to Lodz from surrounding areas, and you've mentioned...I mean do you remember them arriving, do you remember sort of hoards of people arriving in the ghetto?

Not really, not really, no. They always made sure nobody...somehow they always did them either during the night... They kept this away from the masses as much as possible.

And then, in the summer 1942, apparently with the beginning of the deportations, that's when they started to take people out of the ghetto.

Yes, but they took them all the time, but not probably in 1940. From '41 they started.

End of F2915 Side A

F2915 Side B

.....September '42, the deportations ceased, is that right, or did they continue? Were there always deportations?

They continued to the very end, yes. People taken out and brought in. I would say by 1943, end of '43, there were not many people brought in to the ghetto any more, because outside the ghetto there were not many left.

But you think that the ins and the outs were still going on past '42.

Oh yes, yes.

Past '42.

Very much so.

They said also that the ghetto administration was liquidated at the end of '42.

No.

Was that incorrect?

Yes, absolutely.

This is Martin Gilbert, so his facts were completely wrong.

They were completely wrong, completely wrong. I mean when you see this 'Chronicle of the Ghetto', the administration went on till the very end, August '44, sure.

Well he got this completely wrong.

Oh he doesn't know, no.

So the administration went on as before.

To the very last day.

To the very last day.

To the end.

Yes, right. So we come up then to '44.

Yes. 1944, by July 1944 we heard already the artillery which was only 130 kilometres from Lodz to Warsaw; at night when it was quiet we heard the artillery near Warsaw. Of course we were excited, the frontier is getting nearer. And then, the end of July beginning of August posters were put up all over the ghetto, and at that

time there were about 70,000 in the ghetto, and again we were asked to come to a meeting to be addressed by this Bibov at that same place, of the Lutonyevska there. And then this Bibov came, only a youngist fellow, and he said - and that shows you simply how the machinery worked - he said, 'Friends', he started off, 'I am sure that at night you will hear the artillery firing, and this is already near Warsaw. The enemy is coming nearer. We need you, you helped us in our...' well *kampfny*[ph] which means, in our fight, against the enemy. 'You have worked for us, we appreciate it, and we still need you, because we are going to push the enemy further away from us. And we need you all, and we are going to make sure that you don't fall into the hands of the enemy, because if you do, because you worked for us they will kill you out. We have established other places where you will continue working for us, and we will take you away from here because it's getting too dangerous.' Well, we all had mixed feelings. In one way we wanted to be there, and here already the front is getting nearer, it's coming to an end. On the other hand, maybe he is right. But in any case we had no say in it, no say in it, still had to do whatever we were told. And he said that street by street they will come and take us to the station, and transport us by railway, by train, and comfort, and we will get food for the journey and so on. All right, they started off, street by street, and we where were...of course by that time we lived already on *Volvolska*; we had to leave by 1943 the *Franschischkanska*[ph], because as the population was shrinking in the ghetto, they made it smaller and smaller, so it was easier for them control. They did the same with the Warsaw ghetto, the same. Again I must try and remember and bring you a...when I was there with Tanya, it was rather an interesting map of how the Warsaw ghetto, how they did the same, how it shrank. As less people got in they made it smaller.

So where had you been moved to?

From the *Franschischkanska*[ph] to *Volvolska*[ph], on the same street where the big synagogue was, the same street.

And what had you been given there?

A very small room, probably as big as this. We were still the five of us.

Were you able to take anything with you?

Of course you're going back to 1944, beginning of June, my older sister took ill. She was like choking. Because by then there was no more medication nor hospital or doctors, nothing. She died the 4th of June 1944.

Really, in the ghetto, yes.

In the ghetto, yes. I went to bury her. I went to the cemetery with Tanya this time; we didn't go to the grave unfortunately. I've been there before, 20 years ago I went there, but there was no...you cannot see anything, it's overgrown, but I recognise where it was, where it was. The address is there, I went to the Jewish Committee and the records were kept, and I've got the exact record of the address of the grave, of where she was buried. So...

How was it organised that people would be buried? Did the Jewish police organise that, or was it the family?

No they had what was called the Chevra Kaddisha.

I see.

Yes. But by...I still managed to take her there and bury her myself. Because by that time, there were so many deaths that they simply went round from street to street and find out how many bodies are there in this street and just collected them and took them to the cemetery and that's it. I mean people died by the hundreds every day. So coming back to this...

Do you know what she died of?

We thought it was diphtheria, because she was choking, yes. This is our interpretation, she died of diphtheria. She was burning away I remember and she was choking. So we translated it into diphtheria.

Were you able to do anything for her while she was ill?

Nothing at all.

Nothing at all.

Nothing at all, no. And then, Bibov, so...oh, they started taking street by street, and ours, when we lived on Volvolska then, it's August 10th, they came, we went, and everybody got a round bread, probably about two kilo per person, which was great. Took this bread on the arm, and taken away with the lorries to the station. Of course when we got to the station, we realised that it's not going to be so easy, we're not going to work. The cattle trains there, and pushed in. Immediately, as soon as we got to the station, the usual violence and so on, so we realised right away, just went there and pushed to full capacity in each cattle truck. And that's it, and we went, we carried on, and whether we travelled a day or a week or how many hours I don't know.

You still had the bread? Did everybody still have the bread?

Oh yes yes yes. It seemed like a year, but... And then we arrived, which was, we found out then, it was Auschwitz.

But you didn't know at the time, no.

No. This is where we stop. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

....whole group of Jews who were left in the ghetto to clean it up.

Yes.

How were they picked, how was it, do you know anything about that?

[INAUDIBLE] You know, when we were in London...

I know, we met someone...

That big woman, she was one of them.

That's right, one of those that had been selected to stay behind.

And one girl who wanted, who I said, she wanted to marry me, that was the first day when I arrived back after the war to Lodz, she was one of them as well, we worked together, yes, she was one of them as well. There were 700 I think. Yes, oh yes, so you had the privilege of meeting one.

Yes, I remember that.

Just a matter of luck, a matter of luck. It was from probably...the whole surprise, it was from the last day, the very last transport, and they decided then to take so many. Even for them...in fact when I went back after the war I saw these seven graves against the wall, cemetery wall, very large square graves. So at the last minute, to take them there and shoot them, a hundred in each grave and buried them. In fact what they have done after the war, they had already organised, some Orthodox people - I don't know who they were, I wasn't really interested in that, I had enough to think of, other things, when I went back - they collected old prayer books and all sorts of things and buried them in the graves. Well this is according to the Jewish law they have done that, and they're still there, these graves are there.

Yes. Right. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Before we finish with the ghetto I think...I said about this Romkovsky[ph], about his good part - not his good part, his genius side of him - and well, as far as I can see, stories may make him different, but I lived with him for four and a half years, his wicked part. And there was no question about it, what he organised, with his sort of...the system how it worked in the ghetto, of course the big advantage to us was that when we went to it we went on our own, and with very little fear as well, which was very unusual, to walk without fear under the German occupation. Something for a Jew to walk without fear in German occupation, because we did have in the ghetto the yellow star, we had to have.

I saw that on the photographs.

Yes, on the left side, back and front. Oh you were still forced to wear it, with the word 'Jude'. But even with the yellow star we walked reasonably free in the streets, which was a fantastic thing for a Jew to be able to walk free with these yellow stars back and front and...well, it was almost unknown in most part of the occupation. Also the big advantage was, in the concentration camp you were guarded all the time by SS. Here, the way he organised the ghetto, we were guarded by Jews. It didn't matter some were stricter than others, but still we were not guarded by SS men. So I'm sure history will take this into account. But on the other side, in 1942 when, and this I will

never forget, this is one thing which sticks in my mind, always will do, the number of times it comes back to me, a man to stand in front of at least 20,000 people like this, in this Lutonyevska and the place where all the [INAUDIBLE] used to come, standing on a rostrum, and of course he spoke in Yiddish, and he starts off, '[YIDDISH]', Jews of mercy. And [YIDDISH], a week before Rosh Hashonah, '[YIDDISH]', I am telling you, '[YIDDISH]', that you must give away your child as a sacrifice. And then he went on, '[YIDDISH]': After the war when I will ask for pardon. Well, I only hope that historians won't excuse him for that particular moment, because of what he has achieved on the other side where he did give us, it was an achievement, he did give us fairly reasonable freedom. The only time he had no control at all of the ghetto was at night when there was always a knock at the door somewhere. There was hardly a night without a knock at the door to take people out, and they just vanished.

And he wasn't organising that?

No, that was done by the Germans, with the aid of his police because they had to tell them where the people are and so on, but they came, the police went with them. So, it's difficult to say if I was a policeman whether I would do the same or not. I wasn't one, and I'm happy I wasn't one, and it's difficult to say. Because one has got to give, or one has got to make some allowances for the circumstances; even the biggest angel became a villain. So, you don't know whether you or anybody else wouldn't somehow act in a similar way, we will never know. So, we've got to make allowances. But for that at least I will never forgive him for what he has done, that week before Rosh Hashonah, to make a statement like this. Never. All right, you can say well, what else could he have done? All announcements, and there was hardly a day, hardly a week without an announcement where posters were put round all over the ghetto, announcing various things, all sorts. Rations will be cut and this will be stopped and this will be...all the time, and nothing for good, always for...everything was from bad to worse, all the time. But it worked, we knew exactly. He could have done that the same way, right? 'I was asked to deliver 20,000 people made up of children up to a certain age, old people, sick people.' Right? 'And the police will come round, and there's nothing I can do.' But, to make a remark like this, I...well, I could never forgive him, although I respect him for many things that he did. If he would have acted like many other people in his position - because what they had done with him the Germans, any ghetto anywhere they acted the same way, Jew against Jew, that was the system, and that's how it worked. Even in the camps, the order is of the camp, who was it? Not the SS men, a Jew. It was Pole against Pole, Czech against Czech, and that's how they did it and they achieved what they wanted out of it.

What happened to Romkovsky[ph] at the end when the ghetto was closed up, liquidated?

Oh, well he...his brother, he had a brother who was just like him, a bit taller I remember, also had...oh he gave all his family jobs, all his family had jobs, and with these jobs they had as much to eat as they want, everything. His police, his whole administration and everything, they took them with the last transport into Auschwitz, and I heard from eyewitnesses who were there, in fact when you interview Sam Lasky[ph], he was about a year and a half in Auschwitz, and he can remember, ask

him, has he seen... He worked in Auschwitz when Romkovsky[ph] came, and from what I was told from eyewitnesses who were there when they brought the transport with him, instead of putting him in the gas chambers and then the crematorium, they put them all alive in the crematorium. In fact this Bibov was there, and he said to him, well, he greeted him, but again he says to him, 'Well you know the 70,000 people what you had in the ghetto, you ruled over in the ghetto of the last, which was the 70,000 people at the end of it, this is where you brought them, and this is where you will go.' He was arguing with him, shouting, 'Look what I have done for you.' That's it, [INAUDIBLE] and that's it. The whole lot, none of them survived. And that was the end of it. And they've done this with everyone, they've done this with everyone. Whoever they used working in the extermination camps, they always used the inmates to do the work, and after two weeks, three weeks, four weeks maximum, they have done away with them and brought new ones in. Just to make sure that there is no evidence left, that nobody can tell anyone. Well that was the idea. This comes under the 'Planmassig' [INAUDIBLE]. Yes. Oh that was...it worked, it worked. They used the highest techniques and it worked for them. So now coming back to the arrival at Auschwitz.

Were you still together with your family at that point?

We travelled in the same cattle truck. Immediately we got there, there was the symphony orchestra, women, with all violins playing, they played us in all right, yes. Which, you must have read books about the orchestra of Auschwitz, there is a book written about it; I've got it as it happens, yes, I've got it. I don't know whether you have a book about this, but I have got a book about the history of that. And the men who worked on the ramp[??], mostly Jews, and just at that time there were a lot of French Jews. If you ask me what it means, I don't know, but [INAUDIBLE]. Again you must have come across in the books. They worked on the ramp[??], like porters, they were the porters. And as soon as they opened the sealed door, and actually...the SS were there and immediately, rouse rouse rouse, just with the whips, and...out. And at that very moment when you opened the door, I lost sight of my mother and sister, and never seen them at all, it was in that very moment. I cannot remember, in fact I don't remember even seeing them coming out. I stuck with my father somehow, but Mother and sister, never seen them, they just vanished, as we were chased out. And as we were all out, then they made...each transport was the same, lined up, women on one side, men on the other. The women were selected first, which was this Mengele with his white uniform with a little bayonet, women first. Again I never had sight of my mother and sister. And then on the other side it came to men, and for some reason my father and myself, he pointed the bayonet both the same way, so we went in what they called the transit, the part of the camp where they sent us to Birkenau, because the crematoriums were in the Birkenau, and the transit camp were[??] all in Birkenau, because that's where they fed the crematoriums from. It was called the Zigeunerlager. The reason why it was called Zigeuner, because in May/June '44 the Hungarian Jews came, that was the deal with Eichmann if you read about, they tried to make the...if so many trucks[??] for so many Jews. Because he was appointed in '44 to the Final Solution, and of course the deal wasn't made, so he rounded up all the Jews and sent them to Auschwitz. After then they rounded up all the Gipsies, Zigeuner is Gipsy, all the Gipsies, and we followed them. So they referred our home[??] as the Zigeunerlager. But it was a transit place; from there it was either one or the other:

either you were taken out to work, or if they were short... I mean all the time, if they were short of 500 people, 1,000 people, so they came into the Zigeunerlager and took out to feed the crematoriums.

At what point did you discover of the existence of the crematoriums? Because you said that you had never heard of Auschwitz.

No, it was the first night. In fact as we came in...yes everybody...we didn't know where we were going, took it for granted we were going to another place to work for them, as we were told by Bibov. And they said, the Canada[??], members of the Canada[??], laughed, they said, oh, they said, 'Leave all this here', and pointed to the chimneys. They said, 'You see there, these chimneys, you're going there, you're going to finish up there.' And well, it clicked. And then of course, when myself and my father we were both sent into this Zigeunerlager, which was like a transit place, and we started talking to people who were there already, so that's when we found out the whole truth about where we were, and what was happening. You were not allowed to stay in the barrack except maybe five, six hours during the night. All of us used to roam around; it was a massive place, massive.

What was the barrack like?

Very very large, wooden barrack, with these pillars holding up the roof. And just concrete floor, and when you went in you just slept on that floor.

On the floor?

Oh yes, yes, yes. That's all there was. And in the morning, four o'clock in the morning, three o'clock...oh no, it was early enough, they just threw in - there were about 300, 400 in a barrack, it was like a sardine, one next to another - in the morning they would throw in 100, 50, 100, 150 portions of bread and fight over it. They weren't interested in feeding us or anything like this, because it's either...either you went out within a day or two, you were selected for work in a concentration camp to work in various parts of Germany, or they took the people [INAUDIBLE].

Were you still in your own clothes at that point?

No, no, no. What happened, those who were selected to go into the Zigeunerlager, we were still dressed, and they took us in what they said, the de-lousing department, which, the body was shaved. First you got undressed in one room, left your clothes, went into the other room, your body was shaved, splashed with disinfectant, and then went into another room and they gave us these uniforms, these striped pyjamas and that was it.

What about shoes?

The shoes they allowed us to keep, for some reason. And funnily enough, I don't until this day, the strap, the belt I had around my trousers, I've still got it, and I just don't know how I was allowed to keep it, how I kept it; I can't remember a single thing, no. It's almost in shreds, but that's the only thing what I've still got, yes. Yes I think

Tanya will inherit it from me. That's the only, only thing what I have got left, and I would love to remember how was I allowed to keep it. Only the shoes they allowed.

So you kept your own shoes.

Yes.

And what was it, it was just like a shirt and trousers? Was there anything...?

There was a jacket, striped jacket, made of very very poorly woven... Well we said that it was made from paper, which probably... And the trousers the same, to match. It didn't matter if some got two sizes too small or two sizes too big, whatever. Nobody was fat, so it was never too small, that's for sure.

And a hat, did you get anything for your head?

A hat as well, a beret, made of the same material.

End of F2915 Side B

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.....not at this stage have a number?

No.

No, nothing like that, no.

A number is only those who were in main, working in Auschwitz. Because don't forget Auschwitz, it's such a massive place. They had all the Polish coal mines; they lived in Auschwitz and they went to Yavodjne[ph] to the coalmines. The Bulner[ph] factory was only eight kilometres from Auschwitz. They lived in Auschwitz and went to work every morning. I C Farben, it's like the ICI here, they all lived there and worked... Oh they made, they built all the factories around there because they had the labour force there. And they were not worried, if people stopped working, they didn't have any more energy, they died out or whatever, or they decided to take 1,000 into the crematorium, so they brought new, it was no problem, no problem there. But of course, in these factories they had already other nationalities working as well, not just Jews.

So how long were you in the Zigeunerlager for? You say you were brought to the Zigeunerlager, and from there you were either going to be...

Well, with me, where I could have left within a day or two, that was considered, for me it was the biggest tragedy of the war, amongst all the happenings.

What was that?

The first morning after the first so-called night's sleep my father... In the morning when they woke us up, and out in the grounds and that's it, and you had to just roam around the grounds until eleven, ten, eleven o'clock at night. He said to me, his right side, arm, leg, is numb. And I kept pinching him, and he didn't feel a single thing. And of course I realised it's from the concrete floor. So, I didn't want...I decided no, I'll wait, maybe it will get better, but I could see it's not getting better and he immediately said to me, when he realised, he said, right, they want 150 come forward to go to work, 200, 500, so on, and he kept saying, 'Go, go,' and I said no, I'm not going. But the funniest thing happened. The second day we were there, that's when we woke up, the first day, my father was a watch repairer as I mentioned to you before, an SS man comes in there to this barrack and he says, 'Ist ein Uhrmacher da? [??] Uhrmacher is in German a watchmaker. So, I said to my father go on, say you are a watchmaker, and he says no, he says, 'I cannot do it. They give me some work, what can I do? I'm not...' He wouldn't. Again what made me do it I don't know, I put a hand up, and put my father's hand up as well. So, once I got there, even after the first night I realised, well that's it, we'll never get out from there, finish. At night you could see, even the first night we were there, these piles, clouds of bright orange and red smoke. The smell, you just had to go around like this, holding our nostrils, the smell was terrible. In fact after a time we knew whether they burn well-fed Jews or almost corpses, the smell you could distinct it so much. The corpses were very light, you know, people became starved, a very light smell; and those who came

still well fed they were a very strong smell. You could tell, you could tell by the smell quite easily, yes, whether they were well-fed or they were almost dead. So, put a hand up, and they said to us right, at twelve o'clock the two of you, both, you come into the SS kitchen. My father, 'No, I'm not going there.' I said, 'Come on, what have we got to lose? Let's go.' Anyway, we went there. Now what happened? They gave us two containers, and they gave us the dinner; the dinner was a very very thick soup with meat and potatoes and vegetables, food which we had never eaten since September '39. And then they gave us a small French loaf and a half a packet of margarine. And they said, 'Come tomorrow at twelve o'clock, and every day come here.' And this went on...

But they didn't tell you to do any work?

No. Never happened. If they worked, then they've done away with the both of us[??]. Never asked us to do anything. And every day, I was there from the 10th of August until the first day of Rosh Hashonah in '44. I reckoned I was there about six or seven weeks.

Oh, so you did nothing during the day?

Nothing at all, nothing at all. Well of course there was not the...it was just like a waiting place, waiting for either to go to the crematoriums or to be taken out, put on a transport and go to work in a concentration camp. See the difference, people get mixed up here with Auschwitz and the concentration, they were two different things. One was extermination camp, and the other where you worked was a concentration camp, two different things. Well you know enough about it and you understand, but most people don't. And that's another bit of luck which we had, and because of my father I stayed all this time in the Zigeunerlager in Birkenau. I didn't [INAUDIBLE], and it drove me crazy, because from the beginning of September '44 you could see that the place became empty. The people which were in absolutely thousands, or tens of thousands when we first arrived in the grounds where the Birkenau was, where all the barracks were, by September there were already hundreds walking around, it was almost empty. The crematoriums, instead of all the four, only one worked. So, the Final Solution came to an end. And also, they realised that the Russians came nearer.

Could you hear any fighting?

There we couldn't, no, no. In the ghetto we did but in Auschwitz we didn't, we were too far away, because this was southern Poland, right the other end of Poland. And he kept driving me crazy, minding and minding and minding me to go, and he didn't want to go. I said, 'Come with me,' which he could have done. What would have happened I don't know, no, he wouldn't do it.

Volunteer for work you mean?

Yes, to come on a transport. And he kept saying no; if he comes with me, then because of him, they will do away with me as well. And the first day of Rosh Hashonah, you asked me how did we know it was Rosh Hashonah, we knew, we worked it out, we worked it out, somehow we knew. How I don't know, but we knew

it. First day of Rosh Hashonah, then a loudspeaker, because there were not many any more, there were very very few already by then, came out, an announcement came out and said they want 50 men with engineering skill. So, my father says to me, 'Right, now this is a good sign. They want special people. I want you to go there, because you can see that the place is getting empty; another day it may be too late, because whoever will be left...' which, exactly that's what happened. When they decided it's enough, that's it, so it didn't matter, fit for work or not, they just gradually done away, cleared out everybody. And he said to me, 'Go, I want you to go.' That was the first time I gave in, and I did, I did go. I put my hand up, right, so, go forward for the SS or Gestapo, whoever they were, and said, 'Right,', they said, 'Was ist deine Beruf?' What is your profession? 'Uhrmacher', watch repairer. 'Good, stand here.' Well they selected very carefully, oh yes, only looking for 50. When they looked for 500, well they were not so choosy, by 50... They said, right, stay here. And I never saw my father again after that, no. Within hours they put us in a truck, an open truck, the 50, and we travelled, not too far I must say, it wasn't far, it was only across the Czech border and into Germany, and...we realised after, it was quite a big concentration camp. And they were most...well they were all Hungarian Jews, some German Jews, some Hungarian Jews working there. And it was a place called Gorkitz, on the river Neisse, or Nysa, whatever they call it, which is now the border between East Germany and Poland. Came in there, allocated us to a barrack, and they were all Hungarian Jews, and the following day they took us to work. But [INAUDIBLE] had to work by SS, which was the first taste of being led to work by SS, which was very hard for us because for four and a half years we walked to work free and came home free, but here no no, it was a roll call every day between three and four o'clock in the morning, and it was a big courtyard and barracks. They had already bunks; well there was hardly any straw, you were lying on the boards virtually. Had a blanket. It was all ridden with lice, it was everywhere.

How many were in the barracks?

I would say probably about a hundred. Bunks, there would be two, one on top of another. And I was in a top one. And there was a roll call every day to count, to make sure that, you know, exactly how many were there. And invariably there was one missing, so they went round all the barracks to see, and naturally they found them, and if they found one, so immediately execution was by hanging. And hanging was taking place over a very very large pole, very high where they had the German flag flying in the middle there, and they used to hang people from that pole.

While the roll call was going on?

Oh yes, oh yes. To be honest, it meant nothing, it meant nothing. If anything probably we envied them, finished, he's got it all over. And a lot did it for that reason as well. Yes. They thought, oh, I'm fed up, I won't bother going out; if they find me, well let them hang me. Yes. And they took us to work in a factory called the [INAUDIBLE], a very very large factory with 10,000 people working there, Germans as well, a lot of Germans, but most of the workers there were from labour camps from all over Europe, from all countries of Europe, all young people. Men only, where I worked at least there was all men. And they were from labour camps. But the Jews were the only ones from concentration camp. Labour camp they went...well there was

a curfew for them, there was a curfew for all Germans, but they went to work free, they went back free, they had better food. And with me...the various people allocated to different parts of the factory; most of the factory was underground. They made anything, from bombs to the parts for the rockets, for the V-1s and V-2s; everything was made there. Then they put me to a very very large hall, oh it was massive. In fact they went round with trucks inside it was so big. It's called the Oper[ph] department. Bright, clean, warm in the winter, a lot of Germans worked there. There were a lot of German women worked there. And I found out only after, towards the end of the war or right after the war, that where I worked, that department, the Oper[ph], we made parts for the V-1s and V-2s.

You didn't know at the time?

We didn't know, no. And it was under the direction of this Herr Von Braun, the one who put America into space. There was a large row, it's...oh, must have been a hundred yards long, against that particular wall, and benches, benches one behind another, where we assembled these parts. And they put me at a bench. Looking back I had a lot of luck. I'm not saying I was lucky to survive, there's not such a thing, that doesn't exist, but a certain amount of luck while I was there, I must say I had a lot. Yes, probably more than the average. Auschwitz is one of it. I mean, imagine a place like Auschwitz, you consider the waiting room to go to the crematoriums, and for six or seven weeks I had the best food of the war. So, they put me at a table there. There were six at a table, three on one side, three on the opposite side.

Were they all Jews on that table or all mixed?

No, I was the only Jew. There were five, and I was the sixth when they brought me in there. Next to me was a Frenchman, a handsome fellow as well, I would love to meet the man now. And there was an Italian, a Czech. You know, everybody of a different nationality. Of course the idea was not to be able to converse with one another, that was the idea. Again it helped me to be able to converse in German, so if I had any instructions, the instructor didn't have a big job to explain to me, I knew it, knew exactly what he meant. And then, I remember I mentioned I think before that where we worked in the ghetto with all these young girls, where we all were revolutionists, sang the international Red songs and so on. After the first day or two... Of course what they did when we arrived in Gorlitz first, they gave us a number, not here but a number here.

On your clothes.

On that coat, on the jacket and on the back. Mine was 57016, still remember it, 57016. And whether they kept the records, the number and the name, we were never asked a name, no no. As soon as we got there, right, this is your number, and here is a number, and they sewn it on here and that was it. This Frenchman realised that I am from a concentration camp, and after the first two or three days and hardly spoken one to another, just staring at one another and working, and there was an instructor, a German instructor, over six benches was one instructor. The engineer who was in charge of the whole floor, a German, big fat German, he was the biggest murderer anybody could possibly meet. He went round with a very large rubber truncheon, and

anybody on site, German, Jew, Frenchman, he would whip them. Yes. The Germans were terrified of him. So, after maybe three days, maybe a week, I can't remember, this Frenchman started to whistle tunes while he was working, as soon as he saw the...he wasn't worried about the instructor, I couldn't understand why he wasn't worried about the German instructor, as soon as he saw the engineer, [INAUDIBLE] he started to whistle [INAUDIBLE]. And he looked at me, I looked at him. Of course, you couldn't trust anybody, you didn't know whether they put them there to find out who I am, am I communist, am I a fascist or whatever. After a few days I thought to myself, oh to hell with it, what have I got to lose? So, I started to join in, and his face lit up, and he realised I am one of him. The next day he brings me a large potato in the jacket, a razor blade. [INAUDIBLE] the razor blade. And when we arrived in Gorlitz, the first thing they did, they clipped our hair because it wasn't clipped while we were in Auschwitz; as soon as you came in, women in men in Auschwitz the hair was clipped, completely cut off, both women and men. So what they did, they clipped and they shaved out about a two-inch part right round, in case we ran away so we should be recognised, that was their way of identification, who was in concentration. Of course when we came in to work[??], and the Germans, there were four Germans working there, and they could see who we were, and they knew it, but I guarantee you the very same Germans said they didn't know anything about it after. Yes, they knew, I was working with them, men and women, old men, old women, young women, yes, and they could see. So...

And he gave you a razor?

He brought me a razor blade and he brought me a jacket potato. Next day another jacket potato. Because we only had a shave once a week. When I say to any of our crowd about this, they say what, you are shaving in the camp? They were all young, they were babies. It's different, they didn't need it. So, we all had a shave once a week, on a Sunday we had a shave. Because Sunday in the beginning we didn't work; it was the worst day for us when we stayed in, it was the worst day.

Why, because you had to stay in the barracks?

We could go in or out, but most of the people had to clean the barracks and, it was the worst day for us, better off to be out than stay in. They used to come in, they came out, roll call for nothing, for no reason. Oh they kept us busy. And if straw was on the floor you were in trouble. At least when you were away, when you were out at work, so that's all right, then come back to this bench there. And after a week I come to work; there we worked from six in the morning to six at night, but we had to leave well before five o'clock to march, it was quite a...it was about an hour's march and an hour back. When we...probably about a week after, we were always there, half past five we were there already, and they arrived about quarter to six, the rest. So this Frenchman next to me he said, 'Open the drawer'. All right, so I opened the drawer, and there was a nice square parcel. He says, 'Open it', and what was it? Meat, it was ham, brown bread with meat. I said, 'Is it from you?' 'No, no, no.' It was either 'oui' or 'no'. No. So, who is it? He goes like this, 'Never mind, don't ask, just eat it.' All right. A week, two weeks go by and [INAUDIBLE], eventually he had enough confidence in me, he said to me, 'You see the instructor? He's one of us!' The German instructor.

Really!

Yes, yes. He was a youngish fellow, stout, yes, it was him. Yes. And this went on...

Did you know his name? Did no names get used at all?

No, no names were used.

You didn't know the Frenchman's name?

No, I wish I would, yes. I would love to find out. I suppose I could really trace somehow, I don't know how, where to start. He was only young, he was no older than I was then, and to start and find out who was in Gorlitz working in the Fomak Fabrik Oper[ph] [INAUDIBLE], and [INAUDIBLE], I would go tomorrow and see it. He probably feels the same way about me, I'm sure, I'm sure he does. I mean they both took chances, him and the instructor, both took chances. Anybody could have...anybody at the bench could have gone in to the engineer and told him, they took the risk. This went on for quite some time, probably September, October, November, December, and then one day he disappeared and that's it.

What, the Frenchman disappeared?

No no no, this instructor, the German, yes. I don't think they caught him for giving me this parcel; if they would, then in the main courtyard of the factory, of this big industrial site, they would have executed him in front of everybody. If you did the work, and [INAUDIBLE] with us, what we did there is like a large circle but in two parts, like two V shapes, and we used to put the two together and put screws in and screw them together, but they were like six corner screws with a screw either end, screwing together. And when they were finished, then the engineer he would come, he says, 'Right, finished?' He would put like a very heavy soap water round, and put pressure in, and if the slightest slightest gap, the pressure would bubble the soap, then there was no messing, out to the yard and everybody was called out, flietling[ph] number, that was flietling[ph] was in German, prisoner, number so-and-so and so-and-so, 507, 5017, 5071, he says, '...carried out sabotage in that tyland[ph], and department so-and-so and so-and-so,' and hung him. There was hardly a day without two or three hangings. There was no messing. If he said, 'Right, I will try and tighten the screw', nothing doing, no, immediately sabotage, accused of sabotage. And go and [INAUDIBLE].

Did anyone on your table ever get...?

No, no, no. But from our department, plenty, yes, hardly a day.

Do you know who that engineer was?

Don't know. Nobody gave names out, never knew. Everything was, 'Hey you', and that's it.

And when did you receive food during your working day?

Well we got some bread, very little, in the morning before we left, and what we called there a soup, which was like white with whatever, light things, semolina or sago, but it was water, hot water. And they brought the soup from the camp, similar type of soup, during the day to the factory.

Oh right, what, for everybody or just for...?

Just for us. Oh for the rest they had their food, they brought food with them, and so on, but just from our camp, for the Jews only.

And did you have to gather in a place, or how did you get it, how did they organise that?

Oh we went to have it at a certain part, because we stopped for a half an hour or an hour, whatever, for lunch, and we went over. At twelve o'clock, from twelve to one I think that was lunch, they came, we went over and we all had the container, always hanging round on a piece of string with us wherever we went, and we went there and they gave you the soup.

So all the Jews gathered together at lunch time.

Yes. No you took it and went back to the bench, oh yes. Oh no, they wouldn't allow gathering together while you were working, oh no, no.

Just sort of got your soup and went back.

Got the soup and that's it, and off you go.

So you say you had had some of that soup already in the morning, or that was the first time?

We had one at four o'clock in the morning, and whatever bread they gave us, had the bread, and then this they brought lunch time. And when we went home, sometimes they gave us a soup again, sometimes they didn't, depends how they felt, depend how they felt. But again, during the work, during the working hours it was bright, it was warm in the winter, that's why we didn't feel like going home. The worst thing was, was to go back, that was the worst. Oh many times, all right, they allowed us to go to sleep ten o'clock; eleven, twelve o'clock, the alarm goes, everybody out. They decided to count again. Oh this happened all the time, happened all the time. And again, of course the biggest problem that caused us in the camp were the kapos.

Yes we've not spoken about those yet.

No, the kapos were the biggest problem. There was one, in fact there were about a couple, must be seven, eight years ago, an American who was attached to the Allied department in Frankfurt, because in Frankfurt there is, actually Wiesbaden, outside Frankfurt, is the American headquarters of Europe, their military headquarters. So

they had...they have their own government there. And an American, a very rich man, came to my office. First he phoned me up from the station and he says, 'I am from the Allied department in America', and he wants to speak to me.

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.....somebody from Gorlitz. He says can he come and see me, I said yes, come. He comes, 'Hello Mr Beale. You were in Gorlitz yes?' Yes. I says, 'And how do you know I was in Gorlitz?' Because I have never, since I left for England, I never met anybody who was with me in Gorlitz; nobody knows I am here, and certainly nobody knows that I am known now as Beale. 'Oh' he says, 'we know.' He wouldn't say. He said, 'You had kapos in Gorlitz, didn't you?', I said yes. He puts down photographs. 'Can you recognise anyone from here?' And he had two, one...for every kapo he had two photographs, one as he looked in Gorlitz and one as he looks now. I cannot remember having taken photographs, but they had it. 'Do you recognise anyone' he said, 'do you know the names?' I said yes, I know some of the names, maybe not all. I recognise...I said, 'What is the whole problem, what is it all about?' 'Well' he said, 'somebody who was a kapo in Gorlitz gained entry to America, and a visa, and the American law has very very clear questions, have you co-operated or collaborated with the Nazi regime in Europe at any time, and the answer was no. And this kapo got his visa. When he became a citizen, the same thing happened again, and again, everything was all right and he got the citizenship.' Now they found this out, they were informed about it, and they knew I was there, can I be a witness? 'Can you recognise them?' I said yes, I recognise this one, the name, some I knew some I didn't know. I said, 'If I see them I will recognise every one.' Would I come, if necessary, to be a witness? All expenses would be paid. I said to them, 'I prefer not to, and I'm sure that if you know who I am, you found me, so obviously somebody recognised me, somebody informed you about me.' He said, 'Yes, that's correct.' 'So, I am sure you have enough evidence. I prefer you leave me out of it. I don't want to start going through, being examined and cross-examined and so on, I can do without.' So, he says, 'Well, we will see.' Anyway, I never heard from him, it was all right. Only about six months ago, I read 'The Jewish Chronicle', and they say, kapo was sentenced, or was found out and so was going to be...how is it, extradited or whatever from America. And I read, and I see Jacob Tennenbaum[ph]. Immediately when that name comes I said, hey, I am sure that bastard was in Gorlitz. And then I follow on, and it says, Gorlitz concentration camp. I've still got the 'Chronicle' at home, Jacob Tennenbaum[ph], and it was him.

So did you know him?

Oh yes, yes, sure. The name, immediately, before even I saw Gorlitz, before I came to the word Gorlitz, there he was. I said, that's him. And that was the fellow. Now the case only finished last year. So he lives in Brooklyn, he's a very Orthodox Jew now. He gives a lot of charity to the Orthodox people. What happened, he had a very massive heart attack while the court case was on, so they decided to strip him of his citizenship and not to deport him. This happened last year.

So what kind of things was he involved in, what kind of things did a kapo do?

They were in charge of keeping order in the camp, and again they...they could have kept order without being as ruthless as they were. You see, did they have to be kapos? They were not forced to. They all volunteered for it; oh yes, it was a voluntary job. Who wants to be a kapo? I guarantee you that each time when they

asked, if they needed one at least 50 went forward. Of course they knew they didn't go to work, stayed at home; the food came, you were eating from the SS kitchen. Again, I didn't go forward, I didn't volunteer, and thousands like me didn't, but hundreds did, they volunteered. Altogether, it is difficult to say now, well, why did they? I don't agree with them and I don't blame them altogether. Again, circumstances turned the most...the biggest gentleman into an animal, right, because that's how we felt, that's how we were; just we were treated like animals, we lived like animals, so you might as well act like an animal as well, that's how some felt it, yes. So, [INAUDIBLE], but they didn't need to be, in many cases, not all of them... There are kapos now who are living in Israel, and they are accepted and people know them, and they were all right, and some were dogs. Some were holier than the Pope.

Can you give some examples of incidents, or...?

It's a scene where, all right, it's the scene, you're going in, which happened every day, stealing potato peeling from the dustbins, so they would go there and [INAUDIBLE]. Instead of saying [INAUDIBLE] the workers in, 'Now go, get back', because it was forbidden. All right, it was forbidden. Some of them even reported to the SS, and right away, hanging. And these are the sort of things. And some said, 'Hey, now go; if you know what's good for you, get back to the barrack', and that's it, simple as that. And this went on all the time. And especially on Sunday it was hell, Sunday it was hell.

Describe to me a Sunday. What happened on a Sunday?

You got...obviously we got up later, and you got the usual bread, soup, and then started cleaning the clogs, cleaning the beds, cleaning the windows.

Clogs?

That time we wore clogs, everybody wore clogs already.

What did you use to clean them with?

They gave us sort of an oil, yes, greasing them. Cleaning outside the courtyard. They found work for us, found work for us.

And who was in charge?

And then in the afternoon...oh the kapos were in charge.

The kapos were in charge of that.

The kapos, and each block had an orderly, it's called Block Alteste, which it means block leader; as I already explained to you with Romkovsky[ph], Alteste is the leader. Like in German, Block Alteste, so it was the block leader. In my block I had somebody by the name Shenfeld[ph], a Hungarian Jew, but the Hungarians, they were the first. I was Block 2. And Block 1, the one before us was a block leader by the name Rosenfeld[ph] who the Hungarian boys knew from Budapest, a man, a rabbi

with shtreimel, with a silk coat with the white socks; they knew him from Budapest. Shenild[ph] was the bigger gentleman, he did exactly the same job what anybody else did, and this Rosenfeld[ph] was the biggest murderer. Pesach, when we went out, when we went to work, that was Pesach in 1945 already (of course we were liberated in May the 8th, after Pesach); this Shenfeld[ph]...no no no, this Rosenfeld[ph] didn't eat any bread, no chomet[ph] on Pesach; he had enough potatoes from the kitchen, he lived on potatoes, but didn't eat bread, because it's chomets[ph]. But murdering an inmate, that was all right. There you are, that was Rosenfeld[ph] from Budapest.

Now when you say murdering an inmate, did he actually himself...?

Oh yes, on a Sunday.

Really?

Oh yes.

How would he do it, I mean what was he doing?

His favourite way of doing was, you know you had these metal pillars to hold up the roof, it was wooden barracks. And he would say, 'Ah, you've got a straw near your bed, you didn't clean the floor. Come on.' He used to stand them next to the pillar and hit his head against the metal pillar until the brain split, and killed them that way. Hardly a Sunday when he didn't kill one.

Gosh!

And go and study the...the human element, the human body. I said many many times, from my experience, the human animal is the cruellest and strongest animal of all animals. Yes, this is how I saw it.

And you say our block leader was...

And there is a man who did the same job, Shenfield,, a gentleman. If I would see him now, I would kiss his feet. But this Rosenfeld[ph], I heard after, I met him when we got back to Germany later in '45, that he went up to Budapest after he was liberated, the Hungarian boys met him there, and they killed him on the street. Oh yes, they killed him off. But I guarantee you Shenfeld[ph] if he is alive, he is still going around a happy man, a free man, and nobody will kill. So there was no need, there was no need.

Coming back to the kapos, did any kapos used to kill people, or was it more sort of reporting and all that sort of thing?

Mostly reporting. Whipping, kicking, all that was there, whipping, kicking and... They went round with these rubber truncheons like the SS. Yes, oh yes.

And did they wear different clothes at all?

No, well they didn't wear these striped pyjamas, they wore proper civilian clothes, yes. They wore a suit.

And were there many of them? I mean, how many...were they allocated to barracks or were they just...?

No, there were so many for a camp, for the whole camp, so many for a camp. This Tennenbaum[ph] actually, I can see him now, tall, slim fellow. In fact...

Was he one of the bad ones, or one that wasn't so bad?

Oh he was a gangster, a gangster. The day before the Russians came in he reported someone who was important to the SS, someone who stole the potato peel from the dustbins. At that time, for a change, (they realised that they had lost the war, and they've had it), so for a change they hung this fellow by the feet. They could quite easily have said to him, right, you want to give him a little whip, give him, all right, you haven't got a whip there for fun, right, you've got to do something with it, all right. Ah, give him a schmeiss[ph] and say look now, 'Get into your barrack if you know what's good for you', and it will be all right. The odd one did that, yes. He didn't need to bring them into the SS.

How many kapos were around?

Now, a count of probably about seven or eight. One was a German Jew, Kessler[ph], a gangster, oh, a gangster. Short, stocky Jew. And then another one a Polish Jew, his first name was Mattis[ph], we knew him as Mattis[ph]. He used to come out with a language and...oh, you were terrified of him, terrified. That's why most of them live in Germany, those who survived live there, because they're amongst their own people; they wouldn't dare go to Israel, they wouldn't dare. Oh they recognised them in the beginning, they didn't realise that years ago, the number of times they recognised them on the street, dozens of them, but they soon found out and they made sure they kept away from there, kept away from there all right.

So there was one German and one Polish...

Well they were most...I don't know, I know...well this Tennebaum[ph] was a Polish Jew; this Mattis[ph], the short fellow was a Polish Jew; this Kessler[ph] I remember was German; the rest, so long now, I'm going back all these years.

So did you used to go and try and get potato peelings?

Yes yes, who didn't?

Was there anything else that people were trying to steal?

Only from the dustbins. Occasionally, occasionally somebody would break into the kitchen. Very very seldom did we get away with it, very seldom, very seldom. But, we did, we got away [INAUDIBLE] the kitchen. They broke in, of course; listen, when you're hungry, humanity disappears, it just disappears. You become a wild

animal. Depends how much willpower and control one had by that time, that's all dependent. Fortunately I kept sane. Even now, I'm still told I've got a strong willpower; if I make my mind up, no is no, if I say yes it's yes. It's mostly, the [INAUDIBLE] to my survival is through my strong willpower, mainly because when I got the bread, if I knew it was for seven days I divided it into seven. In the camp when we got daily, maybe a bit like that, so I would break it up in three parts and I would have a little bit in the morning, a little bit at lunch time and left a little bit for the evening. Yes. And because most of the people, the majority, just finished it off in one go, and then they starved; well they didn't last long. Then of course occasionally I got a slice of bread, because in Gorlitz we got money; I've still got some [INAUDIBLE], the camp money; every week or whenever they felt like it they gave us one German Reichsmark, which was our weekend[?]? with the Gross-Rosen, our camp, issued from Gross-Rosen. And so with that you could buy sometimes one, sometimes two cigarettes a week. And those who smoked, so if I got a cigarette I sold them one or two cigarettes and I got a slice of bread. So what happened, I managed to live and the other died.

Where did you get the cigarettes from? Was there somewhere that you went?

From the camp, in the camp itself.

Yes? Was there any sort of shop or whatever?

Oh no no no, again the...the Block Alteste, the leader of the barrack, he got it; he dished out the soup, he dished out the bread, he dished out the cigarettes or the ration whatever we got.

And you would give him the money?

We would give him the money and he would give us the cigarette. And there was immediately somebody behind me, 'Oh come on, I'll give you a slice of bread, will you sell it to me?' So, all right, so I sold it. And very often now I look back, I feel guilty about it, but, there you are. Because I know he didn't survive because of that, I had his bread. But to him the cigarette was more. It was pitiful to watch, to see the number who took straw, wrapped it in a piece of newspaper and made a cigarette out of it and smoked it. Yes, oh yes. Straw, any bits of wood, or in the summer grass, and just rolled it in any piece of paper and made a sort of a cigar and smoked it.

I'm afraid I'm going to have to stop now. [BREAK IN RECORDING]buy cigarettes. Could you buy anything else with the money, was there anything else? Was that the only thing you could buy?

That's all, that's all.

And how often did you get the money?

Officially every Sunday. But if they felt we can wait, so that's it, but officially we got it every Sunday. This is probably where I got it was from the last Sunday, we got it, and by the time when we were supposed to get the cigarettes we were liberated.

Yes.

That's how we got it, otherwise I wouldn't have it.

And was it the same amount each time?

Yes, yes, yes. And they decided whether we should get for one Mark one cigarette or two, or three, or four, it was entirely up to them. But it was only one Mark.

And then as soon as you got the cigarettes there was this sort of like black market went on?

Yes, yes. Well I didn't have to approach anyone, the smokers approached me. It was quite a...you find a lot, if they[??] remember, it happened in every camp, it happened in every camp. It was terrible, looking back now, who knows how many people died from hunger because they gave their bread away for a cigarette, but to them the cigarette was more than the bread. I don't know, if I would be a smoker, probably I would feel the same way.

Was anything else exchanged? I mean did people try and exchange anything else?

No, there was nothing else you had to exchange, because there were no valuables of any kind, nothing at all.

Or stolen things that people would bring in and try and...?

And bring in, where from? You had no chance to steal. You were led very very tightly controlled, very tightly guarded by SS to work and from work. And to make any contact in the factory where you worked with anyone, then it was just forbidden, you just wouldn't do it. No, where we were, it was impossible. There were some places where they managed to have access to various things, but where we were, no, not at all. In the ghetto it was more bartering with people, even exchange a diamond for a loaf of bread, people still... Some, if they had a loaf of bread, and they felt oh well, the war will be over tomorrow, I'm all right, fine, give me a diamond and then I will give you a bread. Oh yes, this happened. We were never involved in it, we were never involved in the selling or buying, but it did happen, in the ghetto yes, but in camp there was no chance whatsoever, no.

Were you off every Sunday, or did you have to work on some Sundays?

Most Sundays, in Gorkitz, in the concentration camp we were off. Except the last few weeks from about March until we were liberated in May, where we went six days a week, which I will probably come...after, this is already to the end, comes nearer to the liberation, yes.

OK. Can you tell me something about Gorkitz. I mean were they all Jews in that concentration camp?

Yes.

There were no non-Jews?

All Jews, and men only.

All Jews and men only. How big would you say it was, how many people?

I would say our camp was probably about...round about 1200 men, 1200 people, yes. There was, near, next to us, a women's camp, and we didn't know.

Really.

We didn't know. Not until we were liberated, that's when we all came together, yes; Hungarian, Hungarian Jewish women near us. They worked at the same floor in our factory, yes, they worked in there. Some of them of course, some of them. Quite a few hundred women were there.

Ah. Did they also have their heads shaved in the same way?

Oh yes. Not shaved, no, no no, just clipped. There they were gentlemen I must say, they allowed their hair to grow. Their hair was clipped, all cut off in Auschwitz, which was done by June '44, and when they came to...when they were sent to any camp they never cut...at least since June they didn't cut the hair off again, they let it grow, yes. And in fact that's one, when I look back, I feel probably...again with a very big risk which I only realise now, I didn't...not that I didn't realise then, I didn't care, and I remember I said to this instructor, this German who left me the parcel of sandwiches, when he disappeared, oh, I would say about November '44, and they brought in a new...already...by then they were already...gradually they had taken out all the young people, whether they were working in factories or guarding concentration camps, they took the young SS men out to the frontier. Because obviously towards the end of the war they were short of men and they replaced them, whether they were guarding us or working, with old men over 60, 65. So they brought in a man over 60...well he must have been 65, a tall, thin fellow. Again he proved to be a reasonably decent man. And I, from November onwards into December '44, we could tell that things are coming to the end. Most days we got there about half five, quarter to six, standing at the bench there until six o'clock in the evening and not doing a stroke of work. They were short of screws, short of different parts. And this happened right through the whole factory, so obviously we could see it really is finished, coming to an end. It didn't work, it didn't function in the way, how it did at all; otherwise you couldn't tell there was a war on, no, you couldn't tell that there was a war at all.

There was no air-raids?

Not where I was, not in Gorlitz, no. In fact Dresden was not far from Gorlitz. And I don't know whether you know the history of Dresden, where the British went in and they flattened the whole city. It was the most city in Europe, and they flattened it all,

and it's not far from Gorlitz; at night we heard the bombing. That was the only bombing we heard during the war, in Gorlitz.

Did you never hear sort of any news from the people you were working with?

Not really.

You would never talk at all?

Not really no, no, never said anything, no. No we didn't know what went on at all. We knew in the ghetto almost daily, but we didn't know anything in the camp; in the camp we didn't know a thing, there we were cut off completely. No, we didn't know anything.

And you didn't get anything from work, no news from work?

No, no, no. Because the only contact we had with Germans there is the instructor, that's all. They knew, but like I said, by November, December '44 we could tell. When you stand there and you're short of...one day we were short of screws, the next day we were short of other parts, and that was...so we could see the end is near.

Was that same engineer still there then?

Oh yes, yes he was there till the end, oh he was there. And this other instructor, a decent fellow, he tried to talk a few words with me, and he looked around and then he walked away then he came back, another word; it seemed[??] he wanted to know what's happening, where we are from, or what. He wanted to know, and at the same time was afraid to ask. So, I realised that at least he could sound like he's a decent enough fellow. And on the way to the washroom from where our bench was, we always came...we passed...I mean we were watched there, we were not allowed to make any contact with them, but we passed girls where we could see they also had these striped dresses and so on, and their hair clipped, that they are from a concentration camp. And we found out after they were all Hungarian Jewish girls working in the galvanising section, which was in the centre of the building. Because the washrooms were quite cleverly done there so that men and women should have no contact at all. Now, in one direction was the men's washroom and the other direction would be the ladies', not like one next to another, so we would bump into one another. Oh it was very very cleverly planned, they thought of everything. Like they did right through with anything. And in this department they were treating metal, that's what's called galvanising it, treating it. And each time I went past there, they knew that we are Jews and we knew that they are Jews, and from a distance it was just like, the best smile we could put on, so letting on to one another from a distance. And one day, I think it was towards the end of the year, it was certainly December, I took a chance and I said to this instructor, this older man, I said to him in German '[INAUDIBLE] Madchen...', they have their hair... I said, these young girl, these girls, they have their hair grown. And I told him, I said their hair was cut off in Auschwitz, and he just stood there listened, never a word. He was interested, but no comment, no... And he kept looking all the time, because if anybody would see him having this conversation with me, the two of us would be goodbye. And of course we could see, work we

didn't, and we conversed, so obviously we talked, we would have our conversation. If you worked you could say, all right, well he's got to talk to us about the job. So we were even more frightened than in work. But eventually.....

End of F2916 Side B

What did it mean?

[INAUDIBLE], yes. You shit-house[??], don't put on a comedy here, don't make a comedy out of it. Yes, [INAUDIBLE - German]. So, I said to them, but I cannot work, I cannot do anything, because my body had felt...I just stood, it was like...just like that, just like a stick. I couldn't bend a finger, I couldn't bend an arm or anything, completely stiff. I said, but I cannot make it. So he said, this SS man, he said, 'Knagen[ph]', which means, 'Shoot him'. So, right away, two lads there with little spades, they handed over these spades from one to another, whoever still had some energy, starting digging a bit the ground there, and I was a happy man, this is fine; I said, what the hell do they want it for? So, enough is enough. At least it will be quick, it's over. And just then, out of the blue, I don't know where from, or how he got there, because one was expecting to be at the beginning [INAUDIBLE] already, was this fellow [INAUDIBLE]. He comes in, he says, 'Mendel, what are you doing here, what are you...?' He says, 'We have gone there, and from there we're going back to Gorlitz, back to our camp', which was like going back to a five-star hotel, after walking like this. Oh, it was like a great relief, we're going back to Gorlitz. So, I said to him, 'But Shonfeld[ph], I cannot...I cannot walk.' He turned around, he saw this SS man, he says...he asked him to allow him to carry me into the stable. He says, 'But I've got an order.' 'Oh' he says, '[INAUDIBLE] this is already there, you can see, they won't see it.' He says, 'Just cover up the hole, and who will know whether you shot him or not?' He said, [INAUDIBLE]. he says, 'OK, take him', and that's it. And he just threw me over his shoulder and carried me in. [INAUDIBLE] I was just lying, and I don't know how I survived there, I just couldn't move at all. Then this little Moishe Eisenberg[ph], he realised what it is, he couldn't believe it when he saw me there and the state I was. I said to him, 'Bring me some water'. So he ran out and they shot after him as well, [INAUDIBLE] a tap somewhere, and he brought me some water. He probably saved me with that. And I was lying there for two or three days, still waiting for orders. Everybody walked around but I couldn't walk. In fact from lying in the stable there, and the straw with the manure and everything, I've got a mark here up till now where the lines just dug out a hole in my leg. It's amazing that it healed up by itself with no medication, nothing, nothing. I showed it to one or two doctors or specialists when I was examined, and there you are, look, would you believe it this could heal up? And they couldn't understand how.

Were you given any food during that time?

They started, after two days they started to give us a soup. Somehow they organised already things on the farm to cook and make a soup, that was the first food we got. And then came an announcement officially that we are going back to Gorlitz, like a great thing, biggest, oh, marvellous, going back to Gorlitz, and we're going to walk back. Anyone who feels he cannot walk back should step out, and he will go back by vehicle, or some transport, whatever. So, we all looked and looked, quite a few couldn't make it any more. I remember I was the first one to step out. I didn't want to suffer again. I knew I won't make it; I didn't know how far we were, but we must be some way after we walked for about a week, we've got to be some distant. Because the idea was to take us away into a zone towards the American, where they knew the

Americans are going to be. All wait for the Americans; wherever they went always towards where the Americans are likely to be. They felt the Americans would treat them well, better to stay with the Americans than with the Russians. The Russians they were terrified, absolutely terrified. They always aimed for the American side. So I stepped out, and as I stepped out another one, another one, another one; we finished up maybe 20 or 30 stepped out. And they took us, they brought a little truck and put...well the board at the back of the truck was only about maybe 20 inches high, otherwise it was all open. And that little truck absolutely flew towards Gorlitz, and we just held hands round together and we never fell off. I don't know how the whole lot... I'm sure that that driver meant to kill the lot of us! Yes, it was only so high, and there we were, all stood up there.

And you were standing?

Standing. Yes, we were standing all the way, and we got there. Anyway we came back to Gorlitz and went into the barrack, everybody went to their own barrack, and after of course...

And you were the first back?

And we were the first back. And we came there, the kitchen was working already, we got a hot soup - not much of a soup but it was hot.

Who was in the kitchen?

Oh they had already...well from us. I don't know what happened there, whether they brought somebody. No, that's a good question. I don't know how... But the kitchen was already functioning, the kitchen was functioning. What happened, how they got people there, who came first, I'll never know, but the kitchen was functioning. The first day we didn't, but the second day we were there already. Maybe they got some from [INAUDIBLE] the second day it started to work, again I don't know. I was just lying down on the boards and I was quite happy to be left alone. Possibly someone started to walk round they took me into the kitchen.

But did you receive the soup?

Yes.

They brought the soup to you, or did you have to go for it?

No no, they brought it into the barrack, they brought it into the barrack, yes. So, we were there at least, I was resting already under a roof, and it was all right. And, took about 48 hours before the rest they came in walking, yes, they all came in.

Did they all make it, or had a number dropped on the way?

I don't think they all made it, I didn't think, it was impossible, impossible, no. But, I don't know, never found out whether...how many made it, how many didn't make it. Again we didn't care, we didn't...the life was so cheap, even to enter one's mind, did

you arrive already or what, or how are you, or are you all right today. Didn't exist, didn't exist. No, but it took about a week and we didn't do anything at all. Supposed to [INAUDIBLE] with themselves. The factory was already finished, the factory didn't exist any more, there was no work there. Because all the Germans, all the instructors and everybody, all these specialists were all already out or ran away, because they knew the Russians will come in sooner or later and they all made their way right deep into Germany and out towards America. And then after a week they took us to work, and then it was very very hard, walked across the river. Of course on the other side, the Germans were still on the side of the river Neisse, on our part, across the river, but the bridges were all mined, and they started digging trenches. Because they were more or less facing each other, the Russians the Germans there, digging trenches. That went on March, April, and into May. And trenches, as we were digging there, it was interesting I must say, if nothing else. And you see, oh, these things all kept us going, any bit of excitement, any bit of different scenery and so on. Because you could see the planes, the dog fights, the Russian and the German planes. The Russian planes they came over very low, and they could see us working there, and they knew [INAUDIBLE] that we were prisoners by the clothes and so on; they used to wave their hands out to us and we would wave the hands back to them. And quite often we would say oh, a plane is on fire, coming down, and all the SS they got their rifles out, and running towards the plane. And I hadn't seen a Russian plane coming down, and each time it was a German plane, each time it was a German plane, and we were happy as anything. Yes, and again it kept us going, put more spirit in.

So you had you fully recovered had you, from your stiffness?

Yes yes yes. Again no special diet, no special medicine, nothing, just recovered. We carried on. We must have walked at least five miles there and back every day, yes, at least. Took us ages, took us at least an hour to walk, an hour at least. And it was Friday...Sunday was the 6th, Saturday the 5th, Friday the 4th of May, I just felt I cannot...again, on the last lap, I cannot do it. I said to this Shenfields[ph] look, I cannot go to work. He says, 'But what will you do?' By then there was no order, no camp doctor, nothing at all. He says if the Lager Alteste comes in, if he sees I'm there, he says, 'You know what they will do to us?' I said, 'What can they do? I cannot do it any more, I've come to the end, I'm finished.' He took a chance, he left me there, left me there Friday, on Saturday, and Sunday as well. Sunday I saw them all, because my barrack was in the centre where the Appelplatz was, I saw them walking out, early morning, five o'clock in the morning or so. By about eight o'clock on Sunday the 6th of May, they all come back. So, I looked at them just out through, only tiny windows, from the top bunk, I said, 'What happens now? What are they going to do to us now?' And the Lagerfuhrer, they had a Lager Alteste, which were these civilians, and the Lagerfuhrer was a top SS man, an SS officer, he was still there, the Lagerfuhrer, a tall thin fellow, came out to the square for the Appelplatz there, and all the SS were there, and they had some little trucks there already, and they loaded things ffrom the kitchen, food, all sorts. And then they called everybody together. Well not really, those who came back from work had to remain standing in the square, and I looked out from a little window there, and he said in two days the Russians will come in, and all the SS men and everybody is going, and only about so many kilometres from here the Americans will be there. He says, 'And you know what the Russians will do to you when they come in, you know what they are. But

with the Americans, we can guarantee you, you will be all right. You can come with us, we will take care of you.' Yes. So again they wanted us to come with them, to go with the Germans to show them[??] the good ones, and they brought us to them for safety. And only one or two, we found out after they were German boys, German fellows, Jewish Germans, they went with them, but the rest, none of us went. After I heard one or two kapos went with them as well, otherwise nobody went, we stayed there. That was on the 6th, and on Sunday evening [INAUDIBLE], well I couldn't do it, I was too weak, but most of them, the gates were open, by late afternoon the gates were open, no guards, nothing at all, and a lot of the fellows went into the town. Came home, [INAUDIBLE], and all sorts. Well again most of the homes from Gornitz by then were empty, because the German population there, the majority of them ran away towards the Americans. So, they went in and helped themselves and they came back with all sorts, back to the camp to sleep. But by about ten o'clock at night, then the bombing started, the first bombing. Fortunately we only used the barracks around the square; the other end were all empty, and a bomb fell on one of the empty barracks. Otherwise we could have been killed even at the last minute, by the Russians. Why did they bomb, is because the German army, they still had an army there, they staged a fight, they wanted to fight them back, to stop the Russians from coming in to occupy the camp. It was a big town Gornitz. So all right, then they decided the Russians right, they started to bomb the German army as they escaped, and a bomb fell on our...after all the camp was already on the outskirts of the city. So that's why they ran away. So they wanted to trap them there. The following morning, nobody moved out, quiet, empty, that was on the Monday the 7th, nobody moved out.

Had the kitchen stopped working, or...?

The kitchen stopped. But we went in, whatever food it was we helped ourselves, anything from raw potatoes to any raw vegetables or whatever.

Did you get any food?

Oh yes, they brought me in some, yes, whatever I could eat. I was too weak to eat. So...and that was Monday, and Tuesday morning, it must have been five o'clock in the morning, so...heard a noise outside, screams, shouts, and I look out and you could see all around, all over, tens of thousands of Russian soldiers, tens of thousands. How I managed to get down from the bunk and go out I will never know, but I managed to get out, and went towards the Russians, and I heard them shouting. Because you know, there was such massive, there were so many, that if one tripped, you had a pile of them, there were so many, so dense where was the occupation. They were the advanced army. There were hundreds of thousands, and you could see them, piled up one behind another, and just with the little bazookas with the machine guns in front and running, running, running. And then they started shouting, '[INAUDIBLE]', 'don't go away or else I will shoot'. They didn't know who we were by our clothes or what, they didn't know, they were just navvies[ph], they were soldiers, and most of them couldn't read or write, didn't know anything, all they knew was a rifle, go, shoot; whatever you see, shoot. And they shouted, '[INAUDIBLE]'. Anyway, so we went back into the camps, into the barracks, and within half an hour or so, when we didn't...[INAUDIBLE] ones already went forward, masses of the [INAUDIBLE] were already gone. And they came in, two Jewish officers, Russian officers, spoke to us in

perfect Yiddish. A lot of the poor Hungarian boys didn't know what they were saying. Most of them couldn't speak Yiddish, the Hungarians, and they were crying like babies. Very very nice, two nice fellows, and they said to us, 'Now we know all about you. Before we came in we knew there was a camp here. Now, don't go out until...' was it eight o'clock or ten o'clock in the morning, I think it was ten o'clock. 'Don't go out, please, stay here. We will bring in food immediately. We will set up a food kitchen and bring in food, we will give you as soon as we can, but stay here. Because you are risking your lives if you go out before then, because now is the forward army and so on. But by ten o'clock the occupational army will be controlling the city, and they will know, every one from the occupation army will know about us, will have instructions. We can go out in the street, and going into any Russian patrol on the pavements, and ask them to go into any home, whether the home is empty or occupied, and take whatever you want, whatever you need, help yourself and take it.' So, all right, we waited. And I went out. Again it's amazing, I can't understand now how I made it, how the energy came back. The human animal is the funniest animal of all creatures. I said to...I had to go to see a specialist only last Friday, I said, 'You know Dr Bowens[ph]...' Because naturally when you go you ask them...they ask you everything about you, your parents whether they had anything, and so on. So I told him what happened. I said, 'You know, from my experience, you may not agree with me as a medical man, the human animal is the cruellest and the strongest of all animals.' He said, 'I agree the cruellest, but I don't know about the strongest.' I said, 'Oh I'm sure the strongest.' I said, 'Which animal could work with so little food, and with such a lot of punishment as we did, and exist and carry on?' He said, 'Well, the way how you put it, I agree with you.' And he is one of the most renowned medical men in Manchester. He agreed with me that they're cruel. Yes, that's accepted, but not strongest.

So you went out...

We went out, and as I walked in the street...no, it's like all over Europe they had these big gates, and there's a courtyard in the back and they live around in the courtyard in the front. And out of one of these gates, who stands there, this old instructor, as I walked with two Russian soldiers. And you couldn't see a German for anything, you couldn't see, they were gone. Either they ran away or they were sitting in their homes afraid to go out; they were terrified of the Russians, absolutely terrified. But, a decent fellow, he probably felt well, I've done nothing wrong to anyone, I won't run away, and I will go out, greet the Russians. After seeing him standing, so they take down from the shoulder the little machine gun there, and said, 'Germany'. He stands there, he looks and looks. For instance, when he saw me he goes...oh, shook my hand and everything, so he recognised me. How he recognised me I will never know, but he recognised me. I was only about 35 kilos, about 5 stones, that's all. So, he didn't know what we were talking, so I said to them, 'da da'[ph], which means yes in Russian, 'da da'[ph]. Right, they turned it around, and they want to [INAUDIBLE], have a got at him right away. So I stopped him, I said to him, [RUSSIAN]. I said, 'He's a good German.' All right, fine, they put his shoulder [INAUDIBLE] back. I saved the fellow's life. They put the gun back on the shoulders. But he said to him, [RUSSIAN]. (It's a good job I understand a few languages.) So he looks again - because he didn't have a chance. They didn't know that he doesn't understand; they couldn't understand, how is it that somebody doesn't understand Russian? They were

ignorant, they didn't know. So, I said to him, 'Haben sein Uhr?'[ph], you've got a watch? 'Ja ja ja ja.' So I said to him, 'Now take it off and give it to them.' He took it off and gave it to them and they went. Because which Russian soldier had a watch? No, didn't have a watch. And that's how it happened, that's how it happened.

So you were in the town?

Yes.

So what did you do when you were there?

Oh we went in, I found myself...all what I wanted from the place is to look for any different food, anything, which we got plenty. There was so much food in the homes, if the war would have lasted another ten years they wouldn't starve, the Germans. Packed. The cellars, packed, the attics, packed with all preserves. The cellars, the hundreds of bottles of wines and everything what you possibly could think of in every home. They had enough supplies of food to last for years. Oh Hitler made sure that what happened in the First World War, that they threw the towel in because they were starving, he made sure this doesn't happen this time, and it didn't, and they didn't lose the war because they were starving, not at all.

So what were you able to eat? What did you find?

We ate everything, too much. So much so that I finished up with dysentery, yes. So I helped myself, there was already a suit, a shirt, shoes, and underwear. I went back to the barrack and then they told us, they came again these two officers and said, 'Right, now there no need for you to stay in the barracks', because they decided they wanted to burn them down, and it was the only thing they could do, it was all ridden with vermin, ridden. We decided to burn it down, they said. Go out, there is enough empty homes, but if you want, if you see a home you want and the Germans are in, just take in two Russian soldiers and they will throw them out and you can take over, and live decent, and go and carry on, and don't...forget the camps, get out from here, because we must burn it down. Myself and about another four or five Hungarian boys went in, far from the camp, in the street, and we took over a most beautiful beautiful villa, beautiful villa. The crystal chandeliers they had there, and the food they had there, in the cellars and the attics, everything was full. We could have lived there for a year without buying anything.

Was it empty?

Oh yes, it was empty. The worst thing was, was to go to sleep in a bed for the first time. I remember getting up the first morning, you were just aching all over. Your body wasn't used to it, yes, very very hard. Well, we got used to it. And then of course only after about three or four days or maybe less I got dysentery. So one of the Hungarian boys approached a Russian there, and they sent in immediately, a doctor came with a nurse. Who was the doctor? A Jew, a little fellow. Who was the nurse? Jewish. Oh yes, anybody in the Russian army, anybody with any rank was a Jew; you didn't see a Russian Jewish soldier just an ordinary navyy[ph], no. Came and he tried to start to treat me. The nurse came several times a day, washed me and gave me the

drugs. In fact when I say to...I have said to a number of doctors the type of drugs they gave me, they couldn't believe it, they says, it's something which maybe a hundred years ago they used it in England, and yet that was their drug. Made from charcoal, tablets as big as a tenpenny piece, black tablets, made from charcoal. And, they got me right, just the inside felt like just closing up together. I didn't think I would live that through.

So you stayed in the villa and they visited you?

Yes. Oh they came to me, yes. And then, one day when I got...already started to manage to keep down a drop of water, that was a sign already that the dysentery is cured. Even with the old-fashioned drug they cured it. So, this Russian doctor said to me, 'Right, now three or four times a day I am going to send in...' he's going to send in to me pig meat, a young pig. They will kill one every day he said, it's got to be warm, and I've got to eat it or chew it and get the juice out from it, raw. He said this is the only thing which will put a lining on my stomach. Of course when I mention it to some doctors here, they laugh. But it is very primitive, very primitive, yes. And believe me, they're not so far more advanced even today, they're not, they're not. And because they're going to the Moon it doesn't mean anything, it doesn't mean a thing. So, they did it for about a week or two, and I got better, I got better. Started to eat, and...and I was there about I would say to about mid June, yes.

With the Hungarian boys?

No no, they went, I was there, in fact I finished up on my own, living on my own there, yes. [INAUDIBLE] I remember this, I will never forget, when we were still all together the four or five of us together. One day...because they had to move the grand piano they had there, everything, you've never seen anything like it. Oh, the most beautiful beautiful furniture. The kitchen was a basement, the kitchen was about...not on the first floor but half-way between the ground and the first floor was the kitchen window. The crockery, the cutlery they had there, all the very very best. Who bothered, nobody bothered, but we could have taken the lot. The silverware. And every day when we cooked anything or [INAUDIBLE], or whatever it is, or even a cup was dirty, we didn't bother washing, just threw it out through the window. In fact by the time we left the rubbish reached already the window. We didn't bother washing, there was so much. The grand piano for a bit of fun we pulled it to pieces. [BREAK IN RECORDING] So one day we saw an older German with a young child, probably his grandchild, walking up and down that villa, and they were outside. So, I go up to him, I says to him, 'Do you want anything?' He says he used to live here. So, I says, 'And what do you want then?' 'I want to come in and have a look.' I says, 'No, only after we go. You cannot come in.' He says, 'Once, only once.' So, I had a little chat to the other Hungarian boys there, and we decided we would let them in, but they really made a bit more of a mess, even tore some of these duvets and let the feathers out and so on, so to break his heart. Anyway, he comes in, and he had a look. If he didn't get a heart attack then he probably will do now. He had a look, he walked round and see the mess it is in, and when he saw the grand piano with all the keys falling apart and everything, oh, he says...the Germans, they're very sentimental these bastards, everything, you know, if you're given a present or what, it means... He looked at the piano, he says, oh, this was for his daughter's Hochzeit, for his

daughter's wedding, she got a grand piano, and look at it. So, anyway, then I turned and asked the man, 'Have you seen it?' Yes. I said, 'Raus!' I said, 'Get out!' And then, almost every day he walked past. Of course, in the beginning, for the first two or three weeks after the liberation we could have done whatever we wanted, but round about the end of May you had very very large, or as big as this wall, red posters, all over, in German and in Russian, and it had big letter headings. 'Marshal Stalin Uber Deutschland, und Uber das Deutsche volk'. Marshal Stalin over the German nation and over the German country. And then it says from now on, you shall return to your normal work, and any looting and this will be persecuted, and the curfew was from such and such a time to such and such a time, and so on, and then they started putting already a bit of order into it. Otherwise we could do whatever we wanted. Wherever was liberated by the British or the Americans, they didn't have the freedom what we had under the Russians, no, under the British definitely not. The Americans were not too bad, but the British, they were more interested in what they can help themselves. No, they were very protective. Typical, keep order. Because they still felt like they were going into a colony, and they were in charge, that's the mentality. In fact anybody will tell you, the British were the worst, they were the worst, didn't give you any freedom, no chance at all, no. Because they felt we're here, this is our colony, we are the bosses, it belongs to us.

Did anybody manage to sort of catch up with any of the German SS or kapos or, in those days when...?

Not at that time, not at that time, no, I didn't come across anybody then, no. That only happened after, when they went back to Poland or they went back to Hungary, and they were recognised, or even they were in Israel or Australia. Oh plenty of them, in the first five years after the war were recognised in different parts of the world but...

But not immediately after.

Not immediately, no. We were more concerned really, food and so on, and I remember what was our dream, as we were lying...90 per cent gone already, lying on the [INAUDIBLE], I'll never forget, there's two things always went through my mind. To be able to survive, and to have a loaf of bread and a knife, and cut as much as you want to eat, that's all. And the other, to tell everybody who you see what happened. Yes, that is the main thing which, the only thing which was in our minds, at least in mine. Yes, just these things. To eat as much bread as you want, and to tell the world. We did expect that everybody will want to meet us, will want to see us, will want to find out. Unfortunately it didn't turn out that way.

No.

It didn't, and it was very disappointing, very disappointing, very.

Did any of you have any weapons?

No.

No, you weren't given any?

No no. But by the time we were liberated there was no need; we had all the protection we wanted from the Russians. And then they told us that anybody who was liberated in either labour camp or concentration camp - there were loads and loads of labour camps in Gorlitz, loads, of all nationalities from all over Europe. I would say in that city you had probably every nationality from the German occupation of Europe, everybody. And they gave everybody what they called a preposkal[ph], which was a piece of paper, that was your passport, that you were liberated and for that we were entitled to get free passage everywhere. In fact we could go wherever we wanted. It's a pity I've lost it, I don't know where I've put it, I've lost it somewhere, but I had it, I had it. And that's what we had, the 'preposka'[ph], and with that we travelled all over Europe. Well that's it, we start next, on Thursday afternoon.....

END OF SESSION

Towards the end of June '45. I suppose really I was recovered already by then, I was already dressed decent. At last we felt we were clean as well, which was a problem after the war, a very big problem, to get rid of everything. We felt reasonably human already. And I thought well, I'm strong enough to get back, and the reason for me going back to Poland wasn't because of the love of Poland, but... When we were told, when they liquidated the ghetto in August '44, that we were going to work and so on and we were going to be treated well, and they need us and all this, but once we got in the cattle trucks in the railway station in Lodz, so we realised we're not going to go to work, that's it. And we said, my parents, my sister, the four of us, that if we separated, and if we survived the war we should make our way back to Lodz and to meet up there.

Yes.

So that was the main reason why automatically I felt well, I've got to go there.

Yes.

So I made my way.

Were you on your own at this time?

Yes. Sure, sure.

Had the other boys that you had shared with...

They went their own way.

They had all gone?

Everybody left Gorlitz by then, they all went their own... In fact I was one of the last, because of having dysentery, I was too weak, otherwise I would have been away after the first two or three days, which a lot of them did. But I just had to wait. I had a

little suitcase with some clothes, I had already a suit, a pair of shoes, and I looked already...my hair started to grow a little bit more normal, and I looked already human again. We went by train, the transport was very irregular, we didn't know from one stop to the next stop, is the train going to go, is it going to stop, will we have to walk a certain part to the next station or not. It was just no regularity of anything at all, there was no order, nothing at all. There was no rule whatsoever in that part. But I managed to make my way, and the first Polish city after I crossed the Czech-Polish border, was Chostovhova[ph], which is known as the very holy city where the Poles they always go to the city as pilgrims, as a pilgrimage which always takes... The holy statue of the Virgin Mary is there, it's the most holy city in Polish religion. If you ask me why did I choose to go there, well Chustahov[ph] is one of the cities which are on the border with Czechoslovakia. It's just the train took me there, it's as simple as that. If you ask me whether I knew I'm going to finish in Chustahov[ph], until I got there I didn't know either, it just happened. Wherever...that's how it was, wherever a train went, you just got on it and carried on. Well that was the first welcome from the Poles. I must say when I arrived in Chustahov[ph], in the station there, and from there I knew I've got to somehow find out how can I get to Lodz, it's quite a long distance from there to Lodz, a long distance. So, in a way I felt, I looked forward to see if there is Polish police. I expected they would really treat us like heroes. Of course by then they knew already what happened, they knew the tragedy; I mean they themselves lost several million people in the German camps as well. And the first Polish policeman as I came off from the platform into the station, comes up to me and says, '[INAUDIBLE]', which means in Polish Jew. I say, 'Yes', very proud. He says, 'All right', took me against the wall of the station there, facing the wall, hands up, searched me, and then he took my jacket off, my shoes, [INAUDIBLE] I had a watch already, took that away, and then he says, 'All right, now you can go'. Just bear feet, trousers and shirt, and that's it. And that was the welcome of the Poles. That's another reason why I hate them even more than the Germans. So, I made my way by train to Lodz, and the first...as soon as I got there...

What did you do about shoes? Did you just have to go like that? Yes.

On the road. At that time you couldn't buy anything, and anyway I had no money, nothing at all. And even if you would have, you couldn't go out, because there was nothing, there was no shops, nothing in the shops, absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing at all. And so, I made my way to Lodz. When I arrived there I found out...even at the station, we had travelled to Lodz, I met already up with the odd Jew on the train. Because at that time there were.....

End of F2917 Side A

Of course they were taken away to various different countries, and everybody made their way home, and nobody knew where to go, where the train is going, where anything, where he is going to finish up. Just...it's just impossible for anybody to imagine in what state Europe was at that time. People were just travelling. The trains were packed, they were hanging round outside to the door, anywhere, anything. But still we got there, and I got to the Committee, to the Jewish Committee, and then I realised that there was already a list of people who registered themselves as they arrived; they registered themselves, and very often they came to the Committee, they put their name down. First they looked up in the list, is there anybody of the family already, their name there, and then they put their name down, and very often the next day, off, could be to Hungary, Austria, anywhere. [BREAK IN RECORDING] And of course, I remember before I bothered with anything, the first thing I did, I just went up to the list and checked the list. And nobody there. I would say only then did I realise the tragedy, yes. You see I realised well that's, it's more than just being in camp and being liberated and still being alive, it wasn't everything any more. And I realised, I would say...during the war it was a physical torture, but then, I would say that the mental torture began, yes, because soon we realised the great tragedy. Because we really didn't know, we still expected that somebody is alive somewhere. But of course after checking the list and you see there is a few hundred already there, and not a single person I know. So then I went up to the Committee members there and I said to them look, have you got any clothes or anything, so they gave me an old English military uniform with a pair of boots, and an old coat, and then that's it, that's it, I was dressed again. Then they gave us...of course the poverty was terrible in Poland, terrible, they gave us bread, a loaf of bread, which was made of potato flour. You could...oh it was like glue, it was horrible. But again, that's all there was, that's all there was. Then I walked out in the street after the second or the third day, the first one I met was this Yitzhak[ph] Herschenbaum[ph], the one I worked with in the ghetto in this leather factory, the one who was the instructor. It was amazing; he, where we worked there in the ghetto, he fancied one girl, a beautiful girl I must say who worked in our group, Polola Totovska[ph], and he...of course, people got married in the ghetto, and they even had children, so it shows you. Here they say well, when you became pregnant you've got to eat this and eat that, and you shouldn't smoke and you shouldn't drink and all sorts. There, women didn't have anything, starving and everything, and had babies and they were born normal as well. So, I don't argue with the medical people, but they were born normal children. And he absolutely went mad after this girl; he drove her crazy. She said no no no no no no. And I used to be the postman taking the notes between them. No no. Then first thing he said to me...of course look how he dressed, what happened. So I said to him, what can I do, I haven't...this is what happened, the [INAUDIBLE] away from me and that's it. Well he says, 'Nobody has anything in Poland now'. But he was liberated in February see; he was in a camp when the Russians came on the other side of the Oder, Neisse, where with us they came in February and they pulled the tanks back. He happened to be on the other side, and he was liberated by them in February when they approached us. Him and his brother Pelkus[ph] also worked in the same factory in the ghetto. Then he says to me, 'Well come, find a pair of shoes; the uniform, well you have to wear, I've got nothing else, and you can have a meal with us', and so on. Then he says to me, well you know, he says, 'I'm married'. So he said to me, 'I'll bet you will guess

who to.' I said, 'To Polo[ph]', he says yes. He found out that she survived and she was...her and three sisters, four of them survived, and they were not far from Lodz in a sanitorium, they all had TB. And he went there, he helped her to recover, and he married her, and they are married until this day, and the happiest couple I have ever come across.

Where do they live now?

In Tel Aviv. In fact they both came to Tanya's wedding, came especially to the wedding. A very nice couple, very very nice.

Where were you staying in Lodz?

Well that's a good question. He said to me look - they lived in one room, him, his wife, his brother, he hadn't even got a spot where to put me on the floor. So, where I stayed was in the Committee, slept; I laid my coat out, on the concrete floor of the Committee. Then I walked out again, and who do I meet, this David [INAUDIBLE], the one who was in the Kripo, tortured in the ghetto. Put his hand round me, kissed me. So, he was also already there, he was [INAUDIBLE] and he lived with a brother, and again he was married already to a young girl he met, oh, half his age, half his age. Because it was tragic. It wasn't so bad for boys or men who were liberated, they managed somehow; for girls they were lost completely. Very young, they were lost completely. Boys, men, they tried, they organised some food, they went here, they went there, but the girls were absolutely lost, they were lost. And it happened so often, the tragedy was so great. A girl, she was liberated at 16, and a man was already 30, 35 or even 40. 'Oh, come on, we'll get married, I will look after you.' And they go, 'Yes, wonderful', it's somebody to take care of her. A lot of them got married that way; hardly any of them worked out at the very end, hardly anyone. Same with this David Liet[ph], never worked out. And so he saw me, so he says look, there are seven or eight of us he said in one room, and the brother is already a tailor, he has got a machine as well in that room. But he said, instead of sleeping on the concrete floor, there's an attic with wooden boards, you sleep there. Got a coat, the attic was just fine. Better than in the cold corridor, so all right, I slept there. And he says, 'Food, no problem, come every day, eat as much as you want in my place'. He says great, it's all right. He was the type, even in the ghetto when he tried, he risked his life, and when I went in, if he had managed to get a bread somewhere or somehow, whoever was there got a piece of bread. Very good-natured. He came to Tanya's wedding as well. Then, of course after a time, after a few weeks there, I decided well, there is no...I haven't found anyone in Lodz, and it was a situation, it's almost impossible to describe, walking round the street, staring in each other's face, seeing whether one can recognise anyone, then you found somebody who you knew from the ghetto, and they started asking, right, kissing each other and so on. And invariably asking each other, have you met a sister, have you met a father, have you met this one, met that one. And then the tragedies came out, people says 'Oh yes, I was with your husband, I saw him being shot'; 'I was with your brother, they did this to him, that to him'. And there were many many cases, which it was proved afterwards to be false. Oh yes. The mind was so mixed up, and it's like I said, after the war it became...we went through a most terrible terrible mental torture, terrible. You just somehow were in the camp, or in the ghetto, you still felt, well maybe tomorrow the war will be over, you have a

chance, but after the mental torture I would say in many ways was even worse. It's like you lost the will to live. We realised that everything is gone and everybody is gone and so on. I went in August, I went to this Volvolska[ph] 16 where we lived. Well everything just, the walls were standing, the windows torn out, the floors torn out, because the Poles used it in the winter of '45, '45 for fuel. All the ghetto, if they didn't live in it, by then if they didn't move in after the war in in the Jewish homes the Poles, so they tore it out, even after the war, because there was no fuel in Poland, nothing at all. So I decided well, go to this little Izbitza[??], got to go back there, maybe somebody is there, maybe somebody made their way back there. So I go back there, and there were...no, I met up in Lodz with two sisters from Izbitz[ph], they sounded funny names, Enja[ph] and Unya[ph], and they were both married already, one to somebody named Leppard[ph] from this Izbitza[ph], and another one, Hafid Steinburgzeit[ph] from Sompolno[ph], where I was actually originally born. Well, it was nice, he knew all my family, knew everybody, knew my grandparents, my mother. So, the five of us decided we will go back to this Izbitza[ph], we will go there. Again it took us ages before we got...changes, God knows how many trains. It's only 130 kilometres but it was ages to get there. But we finally made our way, finally got there. We got there, we found that there were about eight or ten already back, survived, they were back, and they lived in one house belonging to a Smolbonsgrov[ph] in the square, a nice house, and they lived all together there. And they told us, well they already again, they were liberated in February and they got there already early, how the Poles were to them there, and the anti-Semitism already back again in that little place. And one fellow who was a neighbour of ours, they lived just next door, the woman she was brought up with my father, same age. And in a way I looked forward to go and see them, because as children we played in the same back garden there. And so they said that, he said as soon as they arrived to these Jews, oh, he said, 'I fully expected that those Jews are killed out and look at them, they're back again'. So they went to the Russian commissar there, to the Russian administration, to the police, because it was all under martial law, it was all under Russia there, and told them, and gave them a really good story. Anyway, they took the fellow in to the police station and they nearly killed him. So, they were happy, but I felt well, to hell with them, I'm not going to go there. Then, I must say they didn't make us very welcome, even the few Jews. You see people were so hard, they were so bitter that then, somehow there was no human feeling, nothing at all, they were so disappointed. It's almost impossible to describe; here you are liberated and there you feel you are nothing, you are nobody, you've got no one, nowhere to go. So, they didn't offer us even a glass of water, so the five of us said well, we will have to go somewhere and see if we can find a house where to live. So we found a house, a bit broken down but anyway, it was good enough. A baker used to live there, a Jewish baker. And we went to the Committee there, the Polish Committee: there was no Jewish Committee in small places, and they found us some beds and so on. Anyway, we stayed there for a few days. Then as I walked in the square, but as Tanya knows it already, after they visited [INAUDIBLE], where the pump was for water, here is that woman, this Mrs Bischnieska[ph]. And as I walked along she looks at me. I recognised her. She looks at me and she said, put her hands around me and shouted, screamed out, 'Naj mende'[ph], which means 'our mender'. And she cried and everything, she said, 'How long have you been here?' I said, 'Oh, two or three days already.' 'And why didn't you come?' So I told her, I said I was going to come, you would have been the first one I would come, perhaps for a meal.' And she could see

that the shoes I wore were not such good ones, her husband was a shoemaker, she said he will make me a pair of new shoes and so on. So I told her why I didn't come; I says to her, 'Your husband says things like this, I don't want to see him'. 'It isn't true, it's not true. They made up a case but it's not true, I promise you it isn't true, you must come.' So all right, I went home with her. She gave me to eat, and he wanted to make me a pair of shoes, I said no no, I didn't want anything from them, I wasn't interested. I went back, two days after, we got a letter which was dropped in through the door there, and the same the other houses where eight or ten lived. Within 24 hours if we won't leave, we will all be shot, and signed 'AK', Armia Krajowa, which meant...the Polish army which was fighting with the British, all the Poles are here now, under this general Anders or Anderson[ph], because actually his name is Anderson[ph], but in English he shortened it, made it Anders; the British Government supported him and sent him to Poland to establish an underground in a partisan section to fight the Communist government in Poland and overthrow them. So, instead of fighting the Communists, as soon as they found out there was a few Jews here and there, they started fighting the Jews. So they sent us this letter. So, all right, we didn't have much to carry, just a rucksack, and a small one as well, on my shoulders, put it on and we went to Potswavik[ph]. There was already a Jewish Committee, it was a little bit organised. Again, the first thing one did wherever you went is register yourself, so if somebody looks...it was standard, without order, without instructions, it became an automatic thing, an automatic thing everywhere. It doesn't matter, so long as there was a Jewish Committee you went there, put your name down. Name, where you lived before, I am looking for so-and-so and so-and-so, so-and-so and so-and-so. Who are you looking for, and that's it. I must have my name, God knows now, in well over a hundred places all over Europe. And eventually the International Red Cross took this over and formed a list; that's where they got most of the documents of who is alive, only from these lists. And we were in Potswavik[ph], saw the Jewish Committee, saw it a bit organised; maybe there were 40, maybe 50 Jews: it was a very large, very nice community before the war. Now there they had, before the war the 14th Polish Division, which was known as the core of the Undex[ph], who organised the anti-Semitic, biggest anti-Semitic party, and they were always known, the 14th Division were always the most anti-Semitic. And what happened after a week, they were fighting in Berlin against the Germans, and they were fighting alongside with the Russians. You had two Polish armies, one with the Russians and one with the British. All those who went over after the war, or during the beginning of the war when they split Poland, went over to Russia. In 1941 I remember I said this, when Zikorsky[ph] asked Stalin to let them out from the prisons to form a government, at the same time he told them, make your way across to Tashkent, Persia and into Palestine, and he knew then - Zikorsky[ph] was a brilliant man, so brilliant that even Churchill felt the best is to do away with him, and he arranged that the helicopter he flew was blown up and they got rid of him. He was too much of a powerful man. And so he felt, all right, if they have an army with the British, they may have a free Poland after, but if there was an army with the Russians they would never have a free Poland. It was a brilliant fellow, a brilliant man this General Zikorsky[ph]. So of course not everybody managed to get across into.....[BREAK IN RECORDING] So when we got this...then of course when the 14th Division, when they came back to Potswavik[ph] to establish themselves [INAUDIBLE] up there in their barracks, as soon as they heard, or the following day when they heard the Jews there, so they went out right away started bashing the Jews,

oh yes, immediately. So, after [INAUDIBLE] said well, to hell with them, enough is enough. Went back to Lodz...

Were you there when it happened?

Oh yes, oh yes.

Can you remember sort of...you know, what you were doing at the time?

Yes, oh yes. I mean fortunately, I wasn't attacked by them, but we all lived within the building of the Committee, that's where we all lived, we stayed there, and as more and more came, and they were describing they were attacked by the soldiers of the 14th Division, and again all these, 'dirty Jew', and 'go to Palestine' and all this; the usual, what was said for years before the war, came back with everything back again, so... I mean we did nothing, we just waited; every day somebody else arrived, staring in his face, do I know him, don't I know him; started talking, where have you been, where you come from, have you met this one, have you met that one. The usual, [INAUDIBLE] it was already like the first...again it was amazing. There was a password went round all over Europe amongst all Jews, one word, 'Am-ho'[ph], which means nation, to...you didn't always recognise, well this person is a Jew or not; where you were in any doubt so you just went there and in passing, 'Am-ho'[ph]. If it was a Jew he knew already, and he says, 'Yes, who are you, what are you?' It was a password went round everywhere, the word 'Am-ho'[ph]. Where it originated from, how it originated...

[INAUDIBLE] isn't it?

Yes, it's 'Am-ho'[ph], our nation, our folk, our people. One 'Am-ho'[ph], one nation. 'Am-ho'[ph], just like this went round, all over Europe, and carried into Germany, into the Displaced Persons' camp. In the odd one here, when we meet, as a joke we would say, 'Am-ho'[ph], even now, still do, even now. And it was so...it helped, very very useful. Obviously somebody who started it was brilliant to think of it, and you just...if it wasn't, if he didn't really respond to you then you knew it's not a Jew. It was very very clever, and you would hear it every everywhere, that was the pass. Then of course we realised it's no point in staying there in Potswavik[ph] amongst a handful of Jews, and so everybody left, and I made my way back to Lodz. And most, I would say almost everyone went back to Lodz; at least there there were a few more Jews. You had no help from the Polish government or from anyone; they didn't have. And the American joint[ph], at that time didn't reach Poland yet. The British Jews which was the Jewish Relief Committee, now it is the Central[??] British Fund, and during the war it was the Jewish Relief Committee, all the American joint[ph] they didn't reach Poland, nothing [INAUDIBLE] to rely on, or the post could provide. And they didn't have. I mean to travel round like I did over Poland, looking back now it looked like one can imagine after the floods. Like when Noah released all his creatures and everything, so all over you couldn't see a cow, only young calves; you couldn't see a big chicken, little chicks. It was all...when the Germans left, when they pulled out, they took everything, and then when the Russians came in they took everything into Russia, they left the Poles with absolutely nothing whatsoever, nothing at all. They were starving I would say every bit as much, if not more, after

the war than during the war. Because they had...they were reasonably fed, they had their rations, but after the war there was just no order, no rations, nothing at all. Just with the Germans, where they were concerned there was order for them. They worked, they got food, they were with a home. But after the war, absolutely nothing at all, no. Anyway, I made my way back to Lodz, and then I met up with this Henry Weinglas[ph], who, he was there, and this young Moshe Eisenbaum, or Eisenburg[ph], not too sure, the little ginger boy. And by then this Weinglas[ph] was already married, a very nice girl, Dolka[ph]. And they lived in Lodz, Ladyonov[ph] 20 I think it was they lived. So I went in there, stayed with them, and we managed; we were not short of anything, and managed to get already a different pair of trousers, a different jacket. I looked already a bit more civil.

How did you manage to get the clothes? Did you have any money?

They had, this Weinglas[ph]. There was no money, no money; nobody to give us any money. And then, again the idea was walking around the street, day after day, day after day. As I walked one, was it Malena[ph], Malenkovko[ph], Malenovich[ph] whatever, one of the girls who worked in my group, and she was one of the 700 who were left working there. So she asked me to come in, made a meal for me, and she showed me, she had a fur coat, she had everything. There were those who were dead, and they took...the Germans...the Russians came in with such a speed to Lodz that they didn't have a chance, the Germans to shoot them; they had the [INAUDIBLE] graves and the cemetery for them, or they just left everything and they ran. So of course the Poles, the few Jews, they went into the German homes and they helped themselves. Then she said to me, what are you going to do? I said, oh, I'll stay here a bit longer, and then I'll probably go back to Germany, if there's nothing here, go back there. Because by then we knew already there were Displaced Persons' camp set up in Germany where we were taken care of. Because people came already back and forwards, and went crossing the border, and some started to smuggle a bit already, brought in coffee, took out chickens, and exchanging clothes. I wasn't interested in anything, I must say I wasn't interested at all, nothing interested me.

Was there any Zionist activity going on then?

No, not there, nothing at all, no. No. There was no interest in anything except staring at each others' face and asking questions, where have you been, have you seen by any chance this one, that one, and so on. And we walked around, day after day, a dozen times into the Committee, seeing if we could see anyone; and then we found out, we realised that a lot of the Jewish soldiers from the Polish army wanted to escape, and they didn't know how to do it, how to escape. So, we got organised, we finished up there, eleven of us living in this Yonotsvanza[ph] with this Weinglas[ph]. And we organised then, and then we...I don't remember how it happened, but we got some [INAUDIBLE], when we travelled there and back and made contacts, we became friendly with the Commissar, the Russian Commissar of Krakow, and we sent these Polish soldiers; we burned dozens of uniforms, managed to find them a pair of shoes and a pair of trousers and so on, sent them over to Krakow, he gave them a 'preposka'[ph], which is a pass, made them out that they're German Jews and they're going back to Germany via Czechoslovakia. And in Czechoslovakia they went into a place they knew already, a school, 'hastalska dvatsital'[ph], which was Hastalska[ph]

20. They went in there, and there already they arranged for them there to go illegal to Palestine. Because they were the soldiers who really were able to fight, they prepared them already for the war of independence. And this went on for several weeks. The incidents what I came across was absolutely unbelievable, to see, like on one case, talking to a woman who worked also where I worked in the ghetto, and standing there in the main street, and we turned in shops, there were holes and so on, and, it was a nice warm day, and she was outside peeling potatoes, and tells me how only the other day somebody came and told her that they saw her husband being shot, and crying her eyes out and heartbroken and so on. And as she talks to me, she drops the knife [INAUDIBLE], runs across the road, and who was walking there, her husband. And these are the cases where you found all the time, all the time. You see we didn't recognise, so he felt it, so, this is Moishe Cohen[ph], and in the meantime it was Mulsha Bromovich[ph]. It's difficult. Just staying in each other's eyes. It's like if you remember this last year in July, at the conference, she described the last days, and it was so true, this Simone Dale[??]. She says we didn't have the energy to talk any more, so, staring in each other's face, that was our language. And that's how it was, just... And believe me, after the war it was no different; the language was staring in each other's face. And if you were not too sure, are you staring into a Jewish face or not, so you used the password, 'Am-ho'[ph], and that's it. These cases where, it's unbelievable. I met people, and one fellow, he was an instructor in our, this leather factory in the ghetto, what's his name, Weis[ph], I forget now what his first name was, but it was Weis[ph]. He got married in the ghetto and they had a baby, and there I met this woman after, in Lodz, I met his wife, I didn't know whether he is alive or not, I met her with the baby in her hand. I said, 'It's impossible, is this your baby?' She said yes, this is the one that was born in the ghetto. I said, 'Well it's impossible. No, there's no chance.' What happened, there was several barracks which was for Red Cross delegations when they came to Auschwitz, and in that barrack they had women and babies, and they treated them very well, they weren't short of anything. Old people, old couples, just to show, you see, everything is all right here. Because everybody knew there is a camp there, but what is happening inside? So the Red Cross comes, there you are. And she was there in that camp with that baby. So, it went on all the time with various things, but this girl who was left [INAUDIBLE] she says to me, oh, come tomorrow, come again. I went again, then come again, again. Then when she heard I will probably go back to Germany, so she wants to come with me, and right away she started talking of sticking together, marrying. I thought to myself, do me a favour! I never went back. Even the good meal she made me with all the furs, never went back. Anyway it was about...yes exactly August 10th, almost to the day, when we...the year before in '44 we were sent to Auschwitz, the 10th of August '45 this was. The reason why we decided to leave then, because they put out posters all over. They tried to bring in some order; put out posters that said men over 18 should report, register in this and this place, and report to go into the army. So, by then we felt well, we're not going to go to the army, it's got to be too risky the whole thing, enough is enough. And then we found more and more who went back to Germany, after finding there is nothing else, there was no more we could do apart from putting the name again and again and again. And so, we decided, first thing in the morning on the 10th of August '45, eleven of us, we already acquired some from the Polish soldiers as well, the last two officers: it's a wonder that they didn't kill us all, and there they were really...these two officers they were the biggest...we found out after, the biggest crooks going. And we took a gamble, we took them with us.

Because the Polish army were looking for them. And then we go to Krakow, we go to our friend, first time I met him, a little fellow, a Russian Jewish officer, and here was the Commissar, like the Mayor of Krakow. Well he gave us the piece of paper, we're German Jews, and go via Czechoslovakia, we go back to Germany, and we get on the border. Because by then we had already some two cases with vodka, which was methylated spirit made from potatoes, sticks of vorscht[ph], and these black, gluey bread made from potato flour. Because we didn't know how long we were going to travel, and we won't get anything, so we already managed with...took all this with us. And as we...first of all we arrived in Krakow, find it's all right. First thing we do, we knew where the Jewish Committee is. It's amazing how everybody knew where, in all these many cities, the address of the Jewish Committee, we knew this. So, we go in. About mid-day I would say, we are in the Committee, and look out to the street, and there were thousands and thousands of Poles, men, women, children, shouting, screaming, that one of their children is missing. Well, we felt well that's it, maybe we were 20, maybe 30 of us there in the building, no more, what chance have we got against them? So I remember I shouted out, I screamed out to the fellow who was in charge [INAUDIBLE] I said to him, 'Phone the Commissar'. So, of course everybody started to panic. And I still had a bit of frame of mind, I still had a bit of sanity in me somehow. So he phoned. And in the meantime they broke the front door, and one turned around behind the door, obviously he had a bottle of red[??] water; he pulled out the bottle, looked up to the light, he said, 'Yes, this is the blood from the little boy who is missing, and we killed him to make matzahs for Pesach'. The old old story, yes. That was August 10th 1945. And as...[INAUDIBLE] became hysterical the Poles and everything, and started getting ready to... Because they would have finished, they would have knifed us, with knives they would have killed every one of us. And the Russian army arrived with machine guns and they shot them out just like flies, hundreds got killed there. They were dispersed then, all right. So, we decided we would make our way to the Polish, to the Czech border. So we went from Krakow to Auschwitz. And we've heard the next train is not due till the following morning. So the amazing of it is, on the first anniversary of arriving, August the 10th in Auschwitz, I found myself August 10th '45 in Auschwitz, and we were sitting on the railway station there, in the hall, in the waiting hall, right through the night, waiting for the train to go to the Czech border. Yes, the amazing thing of it. It's like going back for a [INAUDIBLE]. It's a coincidence, but it's an amazing coincidence. Yes, exactly to the day. So in the morning we got the first train to the Czech border, and when we arrived on the border there was a little river I remember and old bridges were bombed and just laid across some boards, and we had to walk across. And there was one soldier - how the lot of us didn't get killed, because it was martial law. One soldier recognised one of the two officers who were with us, and he shouted, 'naj mnyetik'[ph], that's 'our mnyetik[ph]'. And he went as white as this, he went terrible. Again, a bit of frame of mind, I shouted out, 'henik, divaliskiseniskis', the suitcases. So, he told [INAUDIBLE], we opened the suitcases, and we got a stick of vorscht[ph] in one hand to one soldier, and a bottle of this methylated spirit to the other soldier, that's it, they were happy. And we went on the train and I went to the...it was the...we crossed over. We just got off the train, on the Czech border, to cross over that little bridge to get the train on the other side, which was already the Czech train, and that's where they recognised him. We crossed over, we went into the other train, and we travelled all the way to Prague. But this [INAUDIBLE], we found afterwards when he told us his life story, he was a professional pickpocket[??] in Warsaw. A

handsome man, handsome, with that officer's hat. When I walked with him from the Committee into where we lived, this Ligyonov[ph] 20, and they were all saluting him, saluting him, the soldiers, and he says, [INAUDIBLE], all this, he cares for [INAUDIBLE]. I says to him, [INAUDIBLE], a lot of Poles could understand some Yiddish, they lived amongst the Jews. 'Shut up.' And as soon as we got in the train the first thing he ran for was the toilet. And then we travelled, and we got into Prague. Again we had the address of this Hastalska[ph] 20, so there was a Czech when we arrived at the station and we asked him how to get there. 'Oh' he says, 'I know where it is.' And where does he take us? He must have heard of this very very old synagogue which is already now all[??] underground in Prague, the oldest synagogue in the world. Everything was left intact, it's amazing, they left it, and he took us there. Yes. And there was already a Jewish fellow there in charge of the synagogue. So he says, 'No' he says, 'you don't want here, you want Hastalska[ph] 20'. I said, but this fellow, we told him we were Jews, so he took us to the shul! He didn't know, he didn't know of this Hastalska[ph] 20. We made our way up to the Hastalska[ph] and we stayed there six weeks, six weeks, again waiting, talking, looking. But the Czechs were very good, the Czechs were nice. They were the only civilized people in Central Poland even before the war, and still the only nation I feel sorry for now that they have got to be under Communist rule, are the Czechs. The rest, the best thing that could have happened to them. The Czechs I feel sorry for. They're very nice, very nice.

Did they do anything to help you or anything?

Yes, they had...of course to Czechoslovakia there went millions of people, crossing over in all directions. [INAUDIBLE] to Czechoslovakia, one direction and the other. Of course there you've got the border of Poland, Hungary, Austria, and it was a centre...there was a centre point, and the Czech people, they didn't have anything themselves, they set up stands with.....

End of F2917 Side B

Many of us, as we passed they gave us a sandwich. And then we stayed there, and oh, it was very rough, we slept on the floor, and anyway, eventually we decided after six weeks that we, because some went there and back, even from our eleven, went to Germany and back to find where do we go from there, where is the best... Anyway, we decided we would go to a place called...in the American zone which is across the border from Czechoslovakia, was towards the American zone. The River Elbe, well that's where the...which I wasn't very far from there, that's where the British, French, Americans and Russians met. You see they met up when the war finally ended, on the the River Elbe, that's where they met up, and that's from there all the partition of Germany began there. So we went...

Had you heard anything at all about any member of your family, aunts or uncles or cousins? You had done heard anything at all?

Nothing at all, nothing at all, no. Nobody told me. Did never come across anyone who say, even that they...even if they make a mistake and met somebody [INAUDIBLE]. Not a mention, no, not a mention at all. And we decided to make our way to a place called Felderfink[ph], which was a Displaced Persons' camp near Munich. It's between Munich and...it's in Garmisch, it's in the heart of Bavaria, a beautiful place. It rose[??] on one side, and the Alps on the other, with the most beautiful lakes and forest. Oh it's like a dream, a beautiful spot. They set up a camp there, a Displaced Person's camp, in a place which was built, purpose-built, for a Hitler Youth camp, a Hitler Youth school. Very very long barracks, brick-built, and long corridors and doors for each one, and a door from one room to another, doors. And we registered ourselves there in the Committee, right away we got a ration, and we got parcels from the joint...from the UNRRA, from the Red Cross, the Jewish Relief Committee which is now the [INAUDIBLE] only concerns with the British zone. Well immediately food was not short, we were not short at all of food, they had everything. For the first time I can say we really started to eat reasonably well, and for the first time we saw bananas. So it's amazing, we didn't know whether to eat it with the skin or without; we virtually didn't know...didn't know what to do with it, we never saw bananas before. Couldn't afford an orange before but we knew of an orange. We even sang in our Zionist days, youth Zionist days, before the war, the land where the sun shines where the oranges are growing, and so, yes, that was the hope. So we knew of oranges, but bananas, never heard of them, never heard of them. But they were already black by the time we got them. they were already, but we soon found out, and we ate it. Some liked the taste, some didn't like, but we ate it. And again, food we had all right, they had a free kitchen which everybody went every day for a soup, very good soup, and we got the bread, we got everything when we went for the soup, we got all the... And then what happened, each time somebody came, [INAUDIBLE], every day there were hundreds and hundreds coming and going, hundreds every day. So, you recognised, you knew somebody, so oh, come in here, right, 'Want to stay overnight?' Stay overnight. In one room there could have been eight, ten, twelve in one room, didn't matter. And [INAUDIBLE] could be one. But each time somebody came, so right away, register yourself. I remember I lived in Block B, I think Room 4 it was, register myself, Block B, Room 4, got a ration card. The fact that you left[??], we had the rations, and we got the parcels, we got

everything. We finished up, I had more and more food than a Tesco store has got here. Every kind, everything was in tins, everything, even cigarettes were packed in tins, chocolate and butter in tins, margarine in tins, sugar in tins, everything, all, like the Americans sell in cans, everything. So, I had loads and loads, loads of it. Of course the Germans were starving, they didn't have a thing. If we wanted anything special all we needed to do is take a bar of chocolate, which we were not short of it, and go into the Felderfink[ph], village there, go into any baker or butcher, whatever, and you got whatever you want. Or, say two teaspoonfuls of coffee, you could have got a chicken for it. And we did many times, just bought a chicken, chopped the head off, put it in hot water, got the feathers out and then, because we had no kitchen so outside we used to put like two bricks and found a bucket, scrubbed it out, put in the chicken and boiled it, and we ate it. Oh yes, life was rough but we managed. Of course it was, the Americans were in charge. There must have been about, maybe 3,000, 4,000 maybe in the camp, actual residents. But they had about 14,000 registered, and one day the Americans they realised that there's something wrong here. And what happened, this is where one of the American chiefs, the officers, fell in love with a German woman, I still remember, a beautiful looking woman, and she put them right, she made them wise, and she said look, they've got 14,000, this is hardly four. So they decided they would during the night, when we are asleep, they will bang on the door and go in and count us as we are asleep, in each room, how many, and they got it. Well, the first one or two rooms fell for it, but of course after, what happened, we always had a little military wardrobe in the door at the entrance to the next room, so we moved the wardrobe away and got into the other room. By the time they finished they had 24 instead of 14. So they left us. Oh, we had some fun; we didn't care, we didn't care, it was just...couldn't care less attitude. And then I went over from there to...

When you say had some fun, anything in particular that you would get up to?

Yes, well we travelled almost every day. From there it was about an hour by train to Munich, and we didn't have any money, we didn't bother, we just went there. And of course the German guards there, a ticket, oh, we just said...[INAUDIBLE]. In fact at the end the Germans said they won't run the trains from Felderfink[ph] to Munich if we are not stopped from travelling, so they stopped us the Americans, they stopped us, stopped us from travelling. And then I went down there for a week or so and I found somebody who I supposed I used to know, worked with in the ghetto. This is in Landsberg, which is not far, it's all in Bavaria, that's where Hitler was imprisoned when he wrote 'Mein Kampf', and they had a big, similar type to Felderfink[ph]. It was an amazing sight there, [INAUDIBLE] while I was there. Just for some reason, the Greek Jews from Salonica, those who survived, they were all in Landsberg. But they were very very...I mean they were all bitter[??] of the Germans, but they, because for some reason the Germans decided to do away with all Greek Jewish women. There isn't one Greek Jewish woman survived the war, they just [INAUDIBLE]. A few men yes, but women no. And these Greeks were some of the...big fellows, strong; they were real... Of course I was told by others, people were terrified of them before the war. They were real gangsters. And they were in Landsberg. And by then, the same...I was already [INAUDIBLE] in Felderfink[ph] on Yom Kippur day, we had already a shul there, we had a rabbi already, we had a chazzan already, we had a [INAUDIBLE] already. And we had Yom Kippur[??],

Shishonah[ph], we had a service. And on Yom Kippur, General Eisenhower was the commander of the Allied Forces, and he decided to come and visit us on Yom Kippur in Felderfink[ph], and he also went to Landsberg, and saw all around these places in Bavaria in the American zone. And I remember...[BREAK IN RECORDING]...in '45, when most of all the children left on eleven military planes. And I was going to [INAUDIBLE] you know, they must be mad, they want to leave Europe already, it's too early, I don't know enough about, of what happened. So I didn't bother. And the same, when I was in Felderfink[ph] I heard from Fernwsald[ph], which is next door, a transport is going to England. And I said, what do I want it for? No. All right, I knew I had got some relations here, whether I will meet them or I will know them or not. Well, but I will always manage to get there, I'm not going to rush. And I'm glad I didn't, I'm glad I didn't. I would never have missed it; I would have never forgiven myself if I would have left and not do enough research on everybody and everything. I would be short of so much more knowledge. So, this Eisenhower came, and it was a fantastic sight, a fascinating sight. Immediately when he came, he was surrounded by the military police, and he ordered all guns all round here, with hand grenades full loaded and everything, all guns must be taken off, and come in without guns, without anything to the camp, yes, out of respect. And as he approached, a fine man, tall, I stood right next to him. I thought General Eisenhower, he was the king of Europe then. And it was very very emotional, very moving, a typical old Jewish tradition when you meet a head of state in a synagogue, the rabbi would say the Torah, and the Chazzan with the tray with a loaf of bread, salt, a candle, and a piece of coal, on a tray, and welcome him with that. And then one who was already the head of our camp committee, who was the spokesman of the Jews who lived there, made a speech welcoming him, and in the same time he also said, he said it in Yiddish but somebody was already there who interpreted it in English, and he said that is he aware that we live still in barracks. See some of us lived...there was a concentration camp at Felderfink[ph] as well. I where I stayed was in a Hitler Youth barrack, but some still lived in the barracks, they cleaned them out, where the camp was. And he said, is he aware that a lot of us still live in the barracks where we were liberated. And he said no, but he said, 'I promise you within 24 hours I will take action against it. I didn't know.' He was very good. Of course he hated the Germans, he hated them. In fact, though Germany, Bergen-Belsen was in the British zone, but he made a point of being in Bergen-Belsen, in Belsen camp on the day when the British moved in, to see for himself, because he heard about it. So he said, 'I will take action in 24 hours.' So off then he went to Landsberg, greeted the people there the same way, the same thing, and he said the same there. In Felderfink[ph] as well as in Landsberg, in 24 hours he ordered, in fact he ordered his military police, around in the village where the camp was, in the most beautiful villas, beautiful homes, to load up the trucks, just threw out their belongings and the rest, they had to leave so much for us, and said to us that they will have to go out, they will leave, they will just put them anywhere, and we moved in. Well, this they didn't like. Now, a few days after I went to Landsberg, so the Burgermeister, which was the mayor, German mayor of Landsberg, wrote an article in the local paper that he is resigning from his post, because he cannot take it, to see how his people are living in the cellars and the Jews are living in their homes. And he went round in an open car, it was summer. And the day when this article appeared, I just happened to be just walking past there, and these Greek boys from Salonica they waited for him with a newspaper dipped in petrol, and as they were passing, lit a match and threw it on this lord mayor, and set the whole car on fire. Yes, we did

these sort of things, we didn't care, we just didn't care at all. Well the Americans got frightened I must say, they were terrified. They were worried, what would they do if we go out and there were several thousand and we would go out, and we could cause all sorts of horrible things. And within an hour, hundreds and hundreds of tanks came in, and they virtually made a fence of tanks around the camp! Yes. Tens of tanks around the camp. But this still didn't bother us, we took stones, we threw out at them and so on, we didn't care. Negotiations in the meantime took place between the spokesman for us and the Americans, and then anyway they reached an agreement that if we stopped throwing stones and we promise we won't start with the Germans, the tanks will go away, and they went away, so we were free again.

And that was in Landsberg?

That was in Landsberg, yes, Landsberg am Lech. Because there's two Landsberg, this is Landsberg am Lech. I've seen, I've been in the prison there where Hitler wrote his 'Mein Kampf', yes. Well we went back to Felderfink[ph].

Had you moved into a villa?

No I didn't bother.

You stayed in the camp?

I was quite happy where I was, I didn't bother, didn't bother. But a lot of them did, a lot of them did, yes. No, I didn't bother. Most of those who were in the wooden barracks, in the old barracks, original from the camp, they went in, but the rest of us, we were...well, I suppose we were happy where we were, yes. We were together, we did nothing, just walked around the streets, and just again, staring at faces, looking, and listening to news, listening to where you were... We always found plenty to ask and to talk, and discuss. But otherwise nothing was organised, nothing at all. And then, it was...but they came, from Palestine all the Jews, the Zionist leaders came to visit us, yes, especially for the American zone; not so much in the English zone. In the American zone they came to visit us. They knew there was going to be a commission, because I don't know whether you know, how well you know the history prior to the State, the State of Israel when it was Palestine, because you know with the days of Bevin, when they sent the Jews to Cyprus, and the Americans said to Bevin, if he allow...they estimated there were in Displaced Persons' camps about 100,000 Jews. This was an estimate. And they said, so the Americans suggested to Bevin, allow 100,000 Jews into Palestine and that's it, there's no problem after. So of course being Bevin, fortunately he wasn't anti-Semite, otherwise we wouldn't have had a State, because if he would have allowed 100,000 Jews we wouldn't have a State. So what did he say? He says, Truman wants him to bring in 100,000 Jews to Palestine, otherwise he is afraid they will come to New York. Yes. So, of course he refused, then the United Nations arranged to have a United Nations commission to do research, how many Jews are there, what did they want, where did they want to go, why did they want to go and so on. And all the Zionist leaders from the head office in Jerusalem knew about it, so they came to us, everybody. I saw Ben Gurion when he was still a young man, Golda Meir, a young woman, Moshe Shertok I spoke to him, he came after Moshe Sherak[ph], the Foreign Minister and Prime Minister; when he

came to us he was still Shertok. It all came to us, and they told us, they prepared us, they said look, whether it will be this year or next year, but there will be a United Nations commission will come, they will ask you, where you want to go, and your answer will be to Palestine. Why? Because this way we will belong to. Why don't you want to go back? The homes are destroyed. We were prepared, everybody knew, we all gave the same answer to the same questions. We were told. In this respect they did. I had an argument with, you know Litvinov[ph], the writer, I was at a meeting in the town hall here in Manchester about three or four years ago when he published a book, and he tried to make out, to convince that if not for the war we probably wouldn't have a State. This forced it. I said to him, only to a point, but the final decision, I said to him, I told it to him, I said, 'Mr Litvinov[ph], I am afraid you are not as well informed as I would have expected you to be'. I remember [INAUDIBLE] in the chair then, and he quite agreed with my explanation. I said to him, I was in a Displaced Persons' camp, we were the problem to the free world, or to the United Nations, we were the embarrassing part of the war, because we had nowhere to go, we were there, and they didn't like it; the Americans in particular didn't like the idea we should stay there forever. And because of us mainly, never mind because of our dead parents, it's because of us who lived after the war, that the issue was forced of a State. Well, being a writer, and especially him, I mean I don't like the man, he knows it all, he thinks he's the greatest. I personally don't think. I know him quite well. He said he agreed with me to a certain point. I've got a point there, he said I've got a point, but he felt he is still right. But I am convinced that 75 per cent is because the embarrassment we caused to them. And it was all arranged, I mean we were told by the Zionist leaders to stay together, not to move, stay in Germany. Oh yes, it was all well worked out, it was all policy, stay in Germany and preferably on the American zone, because they knew the Americans would be the only ones to force the issue; the British are finished, they are no longer a part of it. It's the Americans who take over, the Americans who take charge, and they said, they said stay in the American zone and stay in the Displaced Persons' camp, don't move. Yes, that's why we stayed. And we forced the issue.

And did the commission come round?

Oh yes, oh yes, they came round, yes, and they told us, don't move; stay until you can go to Palestine as a free people in a free country, but don't move. Illegal immigration yes was organised all the time, there was all the time illegal immigration, yes, and I was involved in it; yes I was involved in it on two. On one I got caught; well I didn't go there, this [INAUDIBLE] - well at that time she was Patawovka[ph], she was on this illegal immigration, and of course that was already in '46 when we were stopped. The British, we all had passports as Belgian Jews.

We seem to have jumped on a bit haven't we.

Yes, yes we did.

Shall we come to it in...?

Go back to Felderfink.

OK, I'll remind you about that later, yes.

And, well we stayed there, I stayed there till...that's in...it was Christmas time 1945, I found out that Rushka Patawowska[ph], that's from Izbitza[ph], we were brought up together as children, in fact I [INAUDIBLE] . But she is alive and she was in Bergen-Belsen. Because Bergen-Belsen there were about 10,000 women living after the war there, it was mainly women. Because it was a women's camp and they were liberated, and all round there they were all women. And so I decided I will make my way or go there, and again to explore more ground, seeing people maybe I haven't seen before, meeting more people, seeing more people and so on. I went there, and I knew already by then which block she lives in. And she came from a very very nice family from the little town, from the little village. Her father was one of the greatest Talmudical scholars of Polish Jewry, and she herself at the age of 13, she could speak, read and write English and Modern Hebrew. In school she was brilliant, brilliant, because we were together at school all the time with her. I had to work hard for my results but her, no problem. I go there, I remember I knocked at the door and I said, I remember a very large room, dark, it was at the end of December, cold, miserable, horrible. Of course the climate, the difference between Bavaria and the north side where Bergen was, near Hannover, completely, completely different, completely different. So, knocked at the door and a big woman opened the door, and she says, 'What do you want?' 'Does Rushka Patawowska[ph] live here?' As I asked this, there she jumped out of her bed, and she saw me (she didn't know that I am alive), she saw me, well... Then I realised after when she got dressed whatever she had, I said, 'Is that all you've got?' She says, 'What can I do?' Bare foot, not a coat, nothing at all. Because there, under the British zone the life wasn't good at all, they didn't have enough to eat, they didn't take care of them. The British Army didn't have much, in fact next to Bergen-Belsen is a place called Celle, it's called Celle[ph] but the British, in English it's Celle, this was the British headquarters there. So, I says to her, 'Look, you know perfect English, surely you could have got a job, you could have worked?' So, she was always a bit...a temper, a high...what is it called, a...oh, there's a word for it anyway.

High spirited, or...

She was always...

Highly strung?

Highly strung, highly strung, that's what I'm looking for, very, always high. Unfortunately it runs in the family, it runs in the family. So she opened her mouth to me, she says, 'What do you want me to do? Go and sleep and live with an English soldier, so I can get a chocolate and I can get this and that?' Anyway, I soon realised the problems, what is happening. And to travel, well today I would say from Munich to Hannover, probably seven, eight hours by train today, but in those days I travelled two nights and a day, over the Rhine. All the bridges where they were bombed and the train must have gone half a mile an hour, and you could feel, the whole train went like this over the Rhine, on these temporary bridges they laid with the... Because they had to lay bridges [INAUDIBLE] because the Rhine splits the country down in half. Anyway finally I got there, packed, crowded trains, terrible travel, but I got there. And then I went outside and then met met up with a girl, [INAUDIBLE] met with one

girl who I was together in the ghetto with, and she told me that she had seen my sister, which is the younger sister, the older one died. According to her she was alive there, she was there and she was alive after the war. Because for some reason quite a few girls from the ghetto found themselves in Bergen-Belsen and were liberated around there. She had seen her, and because there were about 20,000 people had typhus there at the time of the liberation, and then those who survived where in the quarantine, and she survived, that's what she told me, and she was in a block where from there those who survived the typhus they were sent to recuperate in Sweden. Because the Swedish king offered to help 10,000 children or people who survived the camps, to come for a year or whatever to recuperate in Sweden, and they did go there. I know quite a few who went there. And so, for a while I was quite pleased, quite happy, again, but I had no chance to start making contact with Sweden, but eventually I did, I wrote, in fact I even went there, went there with my wife, and they said definitely she was never there, because otherwise, they have records of everybody who arrived, everybody. And certainly quite a lot died, even after arriving in Sweden; they would have records as well, but definitely not. So, again it's like a lot of these misjudgements and so on. I cannot make out until this day whether it was, whether she was dead or not. She probably was, yes, and I would say she died there. In Belsen what they've got, all those who were...they found all the corpses and those who died within a week; within a week about 20,000 died from typhus, and they are all buried. You see long graves with the tablet, in this grave there is 1200, in this grave 800, in this 700. And I would say she is probably in one of those graves. Then I went back to Felderfink[ph], and I went there, and somebody who was in the same block where I was, in Block 4 in Felderfink[ph] by the name Moshe Zegger[ph], he was much older than I was then, and I said to him, I said, 'Moshe, we've got to do something'. Paditz Patavovska's[ph] daughter, Rushka[ph], is alive, I've just seen her. He says, 'Her? I can't believe it.' She was a very delicate type of a girl; as I'm talking, so was I, I was very delicate always, very very. When I saw I blood I fainted, yes, very delicate. If my mother would have been alive and somebody would say to her that I survived all this she would say, impossible, no, I don't believe it. I can't believe it myself, but anyway, I'm here. So I told him I says to him, 'Look, she is bare-footed, nothing, we've got to do something for her.' So, we organised, because in Felderfink[ph] there was not much problem. We went into the village of Felderfink[ph] with a box of...had a tin of coffee and a bar of chocolate and a few cigarettes, and we were the kings of Felderfink[ph] in those days in Germany. They were not as rich as they are now, they never expected in all their life to be as well off as they are now, never. And they never expected to be treated as well as they are treated. And, so we went into the village and we managed to get someone who had a real pure wool blanket and we got it died black, and then we managed to get some stockings, some underwear and a dress and a jumper. Everything for a tin of coffee, or a few cigarettes. No problem, no problem at all. And I made my way back again to Belsen with all this stuff, and then already one, this Stamechs Walterkovsky[ph], who is already quite a few years older than I am, also from Izbitza[ph], he had already...he was a tailor. He is the one who moved to Lodz before we did, we visited him every Shabbat, and he had a sewing machine already, and so he made her a coat from this blanket, and she looked like a film star, yes. That's the first clothes she had. And then, after a time, I didn't like it there at all, I didn't like it, I went back to the German[sic] zone, to the American zone, and I went over to the French zone; went over to the French zone and I met another one from Izbitza, Hayna Geitz[ph], he lives

in San Francisco now. And of course that's why I went there, Hayna[ph] lives there. You see you just looked for the slightest slightest link, the slightest link. When we realised that your family has gone, so all right, what is the next best, the next link, somebody you know from a child, and it began to mean like more than for anyone winning the jackpot in Littlewoods. Yes, a contact, somebody, a face where you remember from before, where you can converse about your past, about your little shtetl, about your people and so on. It was a big thing, you travelled hundreds of miles in difficult circumstances for days, for nights, not sleeping, no drink, nothing, just to make contact, to see a face you can recognise, which meant a hell of a lot. So I heard Haynech[ph], he was rather a rough and ready type in Izbitza, I had not much dealings with him, but it doesn't matter, here is one of us, I go and see him, maybe he has seen somebody, maybe he met somebody; maybe I find out something from him. So I go there, and he introduces me to a most beautiful Jewish girl, French girl, also survived the camp, and he is going to get married to her, so I take him to one side I say, 'Heynech[ph], you know Franya[ph]...' Because he got married, he was 17 and she was 16, just before the war broke out, she was in the village next to Izbitza[ph]. I says, 'I met Franya[ph] in Lodz.' So, he [INAUDIBLE], 'Oh' he says, 'Oh bloody hell' he says. 'Don't tell me' he says, 'she survived.' She was a real fat [INAUDIBLE], and this girl was a most beautiful girl. To him it was a tragedy! Yes. But, he went to Poland, oh yes, he left this one, he says, 'My wife is there, I must go back', and he went back, and he brought her back to Germany and he made his way, he lives in San Francisco. They had a child during the war. In fact her child, you remember we had in the ghetto this, that curfew, that terrible time, she was all the time in the ghetto, they sent her [INAUDIBLE] Lobranyetz[ph] with the child to the ghetto and she was there. And they pulled out the child from her, and just threw it on the truck. Oh, they've been to Manchester, only about three years ago they came to visit us, I was there, I was there twice, stayed with them. Yes, oh a normal family. In fact our Stephen[ph] was there before he got married in America and stayed with them, and he went back, and [INAUDIBLE] to San Francisco with the family there, two sons and a daughter. But the first thing he says, 'Oh' he says, in Yiddish he says, 'YIDDISH'. 'Oh' he says, 'look what happened, a tragedy happened. Franya[ph] survived!' He had such a beautiful girl, and the other, she is as fat as this, but...no, he quit her, to this day, yes yes. And then, of course started already looking, especially when from Feldenwald[ph] when they went, when [INAUDIBLE] came here, one of that group, well I didn't want, I backed out at the last minute, I didn't want to go. In fact one who lived in the same room by the name Yassupakua[ph], he went from Feldenwald[ph] also came here, and I said to him, 'Look Yassup[ph], you go to England, I'm in no hurry to get there. Here, take my name, father's name, mother's name, where I lived and so on, and say I'm looking for somebody in case you come into contact; Friedland[ph], Manchester, that's all what I know, I don't know any more, Friedland[ph], Manchester.' And that's how he came to Manchester, Northumberland Street, in a hostel.....

End of F2918 Side A

....interesting time. I would never have missed it for anything, never, never. So this Yassupakua[ph] he came to Manchester, and the first day somebody by the name Dinnerstein[ph] came to see him, went to the hostel, and this man, I got to know him well, he was still alive when I came here, I knew him, nice man, he spoke good Yiddish. So this Yassupakua[ph] said to him, of course in Yiddish, he said, 'Do you know, in Manchester, somebody by the name Friedland[ph]?' He says, 'Yes.' So he shows him all the details of my name and so on. 'Oh' he says, 'give it me', and he will go and see him. If it's the same family, it's his best friends. So he went there, and this is Sylvia[??] Friedland's[ph] grandparents, and soon as they saw this they say yes. Because they are...their son sent us a half a pound, ten shillings for Rosh Hashonah and ten shillings for Pesach, and a sack of old clothes every year. So they say yes. Anyway they got in touch with the son, and he was very very...he was a clever fellow as it happens. The first thing he did, he went to see his solicitor who was Harry Miers[ph]; I don't know if you know, Linda Miers[ph] [INAUDIBLE].

The name rings a bell.

They are a very very old, very established Jewish firm of solicitors for many years, this Mr Miers[ph], Harry Miers[ph], his solicitor. So he said to him...I think we stop there because we're jumping already. We're jumping passed it, and I'm already...I'm already here when I found out, it's interesting that.

Oh right, right.

So, we said to him...well first he started...or he tried to get [INAUDIBLE]. Yassupakua[ph] told him my address in Felderfink[ph], and there was post, there was post in Felderfink[ph], which was sent to the Felderfink[ph] military headquarters, it arrived there, and they tried to contact us in the blocks and they delivered the post to us. It took ages and ages, sometimes two or three months, especially, from America it wasn't so bad but from England it took ages. One day I got a letter. Again I travelled across there and back, and from there across to Vienna or to here and there, all over. Anyway I got back to Felderfink[ph], Felderfink[ph] was my headquarters, got back to Felderfink[ph], there was a note to go to the American office, and there's a letter for me. Well, go, get the letter, there was a letter in Yiddish from the son, from Sydney's[??], father, Favisch[ph] Friedland[ph], or he's known to most people here as Fabian Friedland[ph], and that he got from this Yassupakua[ph] this news that I am around, that I am alive and so on, and they wanted me to bring over here. So, fine, and I should write to him all details again, and he asked the date of birth and where I was born and so on, everything. So...well I sent him all this, and I'm off again, until it was already about maybe March 1946, I finally received a letter again in Felderfink[ph], he sent a letter there, telling me off for running about all over, can't get hold of me. Little did he know that I was more interested in going around and staring at people's faces than to come to the great country England. And it's amazing, before the war I was always dreaming, it was a dream, oh, one day I think I will go to England, would be nice. I dreamt like I lived in England, I'm in England, always as a youngster, always, amazing. In fact I was always quiet and so on; my friends in Izbitza[ph] used to call me the 'Englische Fredmat[ph]', the English [INAUDIBLE],

like I was always precise, slow, didn't rush too much and so on. Oh yes, I was always referred to, they treated me, they called me an Englishman. Yes, they referred to me as an Englishman, that was only at the age of 16, 17. So, and he said to me I should stay in the English zone, in the British zone, which would be easier for post and easier to contact. And I am born...what I wrote to him, I am born the 24th December 1921, and he said to me in a letter, I am born the 20th of August 1928, seven years' difference. So, I said...well I must say I didn't pay much attention, I said, well maybe he made a mistake, but if you want it this way, all right, I didn't bother, I didn't bother. And that was already of course March in '46, and then I felt well, I've seen enough, I've heard enough, I've witnessed enough, and I might as well make my way to the British zone, which, there were several places but I decided to go to Bergen-Belsen, because by that time I knew already that there were three girls survived from Izbitza[ph], this Rushka[ph], this Manya[ph]...what was her surname? And another one, Helen Fischer[ph]. And so, I thought well, at least I've got somebody, and with them, so with another girl who was from Kolo, Sasha Rosenthal[ph] was with them as well, so the four I got to know already, I thought well, I will go there, I was all right with them living together there, and it will be already more homely. So I started already to feel, to settle already for more of a bit of a home, more to be with somebody than just isolated altogether, and I decided to [INAUDIBLE]. There was not much problem, I didn't have...I didn't have to get the removal people to move me from place to place, no problem at all, just a rucksack and off I go, that's it. Well I think that's it, and we will start after the [INAUDIBLE] with Bergen-Belsen after the war. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Right, so you went...how did you get to Bergen-Belsen?

Back to Bergen-Belsen, mainly by train, changing every few miles. It took, again it took almost three days to get there, where today probably it takes, that journey from Munich to Hannover, and of course in Hannover we had to make our way to Bergen-Belsen, today it probably takes six, seven hours. Of course once, by then I somehow...my reason for going to Bergen-Belsen in March in 1946 wasn't...the main reason wasn't because I got a letter from my relation here, this Friedland[ph] to stop running around and stop messing about and stay in one place, and preferably in the British zone otherwise he can't do anything about, he won't be able to get anything done. Probably partly, all right, it helped to make my mind up. I mainly, I came to terms with myself by then, then I've got to realise what happened, the tragedies. It was a big tragedy, and I felt, how much more can I run about, where will it get me? So, I came to realise that there's nothing more left. I got a bit weary as well, got a bit...I felt enough is enough. And then what also made me decide to say right, to go there now, wait and see where I'm going from there, and stop running around all over the place is because there were three girls from Izbitza[ph] who survived it, plus this Sasha[??] Rosenthal[ph] and all lived together, and of course once I came, so it was just like a brother arrived, it was like I had four sisters there, and to them it was a brother. So I felt a bit more secure, more at home.

Did you actually live with them?

No. No I lived in a different block, but I went there every day, spent all day with them there, and we got our ration of course, we made a meal. This Sosh

Rosenthal[ph] by then was married already to this Yacob Ravsky[ph], or today as he is know, Wise[ph], very charming, nice girl, great girl. Unfortunately she died about three or four years ago, yes. And they were very very good to me as it happens. Always had a meal with them, which was a change from going to the kitchen to pick up a soup.

So where were they living? Where was [INAUDIBLE] living?

Just a room in a block, yes. And there was another girl there, this Heller Fischer[ph], living in the same room, but that's how it is, he got married, [INAUDIBLE], all right. [INAUDIBLE] in the room and that's it; there were six people, so now somebody's married there were seven people in the room. Oh yes, yes. There was no honeymoon, no special place, that's it, you accepted it, you accepted it. And by then also I found out that he was there, this Shlomo Zlatogolsky[ph], he was about the oldest from us who survived, he was a tailor as well, he had a machine at Bergen-Belsen. So we had already a little...like a little family, and we kept each other company and so on.

What did you do during the day?

Nothing. Nothing at all. There was nothing to be done, nothing to do. At least you were not forced to go to work or any of this, no; there was nothing there for anyone to do, there were several thousand people there. Mostly women, mostly women; men only came after, like myself. And then, while we were there this Shlomo Zlatogolsky[ph] got married, and they went to Uruguay [INAUDIBLE] after, and now they are in Tel Aviv. Very nice people, very nice couple, and he is the one who did for this Rushka Patawovska[ph], from the blanket, the coat for her.

So were you living in sort of like a men's block? Was there a special...?

Not necessarily, not necessarily, no no. It's just a room where I was. It was funny, for a week [INAUDIBLE] could be on my own, and then all of a sudden we were five or six in the room. [INAUDIBLE] I was the only one who stayed put there. And at one time I had two Jewish Russian officers who ran away from the army, from the Russians, and they wanted to get away from there, and of course from there they went to Palestine all through the illegal immigration. I remember one time one of them he was so ill, I could see he was burning away, and I said to him, let me bring a doctor in. He wouldn't have a doctor, he wouldn't, he wouldn't; because they were very primitive, very primitive, they didn't believe in a doctor or...no. They died, if they died they died and that's it. It was amazing, the camp doctor who was, when it was Belsen camp, under the Germans, he, in a way he probably saved I don't know how many, a few thousand people who survived Belsen; some got typhus and died, some got through the typhus and so on, was largely through him. Because he supervised; the Germans had an idea, because Belsen was liberated the 15th of April 1945 by the British, and they decided to poison all the bread, thousands of loaves of bread, and at the last minute they will hand out bread to all the inmates. And also the idea was, when the British will come in, they will see a store of bread, first thing they will do, use it, they won't know it's poisoned. And they were almost successful, but just this camp doctor, I think at that time he tried to save his own skin already by then, so

immediately they came into this big store with these round loaves of bread, and were going to take it, and he said stop, it's poisoned. They tested it and he was right, and of course what he had done, so they appointed him as the main camp doctor after, for Bergen-Belsen. So anyway, a day or two I could see the fellow is going to die, this Russian, so I didn't take any notice, I went to the clinic and I managed to see this German camp doctor and I says to him look, you've got to come, I've got somebody here, he's a Russian but he's dying. He came, and he could see he had very very bad flu, and he was burning away. He gave him medicines, he got him right. And of course when he heard he was a Russian so he wanted to know, where have you been, where were you fighting and so on, he was interested. And, if I wouldn't have been there, listening to all this, probably this Russian he would have gone to prison for life, because he was going to kill this doctor. Why? Because he said, after he heard from him what happened on the Russian frontier and how the Germans behaved and everything, he was very [INAUDIBLE] for about an hour or more, and he came out and he says in Russian and German, he says, 'Ja, der [INAUDIBLE]', what it meant was, the Fuhrer Hitler was a clever man, but the [INAUDIBLE], the people round him, they were bad. This Russian who couldn't understand the German and he wanted to know, so I told him what he said. He gets up from the bed, gets hold of the German and wanted to kill him. I stopped him, he would have killed him. I just pulled him back, I says to him...because by then there was already law and order, ill or not ill, they would have put him away to prison. So, but anyway the amazing thing is he got better.

How were you treated by the British? I mean the British were running the camp, how were they towards you?

Didn't have much sympathy for us, no, no. Very little sympathy. Funnily enough the people, from all the armies who showed most sympathy to us were the Russians, yes. Most caring and most sympathy were the Russians. The Americans were not too bad in the beginning, but as I think I mentioned in [INAUDIBLE], once they got involved with the German women, which automatically invariably they did, because I mean in those days right after the war for a pair of nylon stockings, for a bar of chocolate, they could just go, pick and choose any woman, anybody, anything they wanted. They became under the influence of the German women. But otherwise they were not too bad, but most caring were the Russians. The reason was quite obvious for it, because they suffered a hell of a lot under the Germans. I mean 20 million Russians, men women and children and soldiers were killed during the war; villages were razed to the ground and so on. They hated them, hated them. And with them we were on very good terms, very good, but the British, no no, the British... I would say they certainly put the Germans before us.

Really?

Yes.

Do you remember any sort of examples that you can give?

It's difficult to remember, everyone I know [INAUDIBLE]. But no sympathy whatsoever for us, none, none.

How did that show itself?

It's quite simple. You couldn't go and complain to them. If you asked for any privilege or for anything they were not interested, they were not; they were not the greatest gentlemen, no no, no. Again, they got themselves involved with Germans more and more. In many ways they treated the Germans far better than us, definitely. Oh the British were not the greatest gentlemen in the occupation, no. The Americans, they felt like, everyone felt like, he went round in his uniform in the street, he's the king, yes; they were very childish, very childish. The British no, I mean they were used to occupations, to colonist occupations; they didn't feel oh, I'm going around in a foreign country with my uniform, I'm the greatest. The Americans, oh yes, they went round with the uniform and they were always smart, always. But the British uniform looked like a rag, the Americans always with creased trousers, with the smart shirt, extremely smart. The British, they went round with a little...what you call, a container with the tea. Oh yes, always went round with a little...[POLISH/YIDDISH¾ what would IT have been called in English, flask? That's right, a little round flask with the top, and whenever they had...you could see them now and then just take it out and... The Russians went around with a flask with vodka, and the British went around with a flask with tea. Any time you could see them taking it off and pouring and drinking the tea. It was interesting, interesting, to see the different armies, the different armies. The French, you couldn't trust them, couldn't trust the French at all, couldn't trust them. They certainly hadn't shown any feeling towards Jews at all, no. No they probably were the worst, oh yes, the French. The French they were the worst I would say, yes. They didn't like us at all, no. Which, it's by nature, I mean nowadays the French I would say are the most anti-Semitic race in Europe, and they always were. And of course, there were not many Jews under the French zone, no, not many; they didn't have the big Displaced Persons' camps. Most of them were the American and the British zone in Germany, and the British zone in Germany I would say, I don't know, I don't remember of any other camp except Bergen-Belsen. But it was very large, very large; at one time there were about 10,000 there.

When did you have experience of the illegal transports? You began to tell me a little bit about them at that time, and then we stopped.

Yes.

Was that around about now, or is that...?

No no, that is about...when I was already in the British zone. Once I went on my own to Italy, to Bari, and from there to go to Palestine. But, I don't know...

How did you get involved in that? I mean was that from Bergen-Belsen?

Yes, well there again, in the British zone you had the Jewish Relief...no no no, the Jewish Brigade, which were fighting, I don't know how well you know the history of the Second World War, that almost immediately from day one when the war broke out the Jews in Palestine wanted to fight alongside with the British against the

Germans, and they didn't allow them until, what was it, '42 or 3, before Churchill agreed that they should form a Jewish legion and fight alongside the British. And they were obviously on the British zone. They went over to the Americans as well, they came into the Displaced Persons' camp; they did a jump[??] for the...at that time it wasn't a Jewish government but it was the...what was it, the World Jewish Congress, the Jewish Congress, which...it really puts...they've got all this [INAUDIBLE], which was, if you go there to...

To the Jewish Agency.

That's it, the Jewish Agency, and if you go there now where the [INAUDIBLE] building is, that was the, during the days of Palestine, until the liberation, until the independence, that was the headquarters, the Jewish headquarters of the world. I mean you go into one room there, which I've been in many times, that's where all the meetings with Weizmann and all the meetings took place, [INAUDIBLE], with a long table. And from there all the orders went out, and they did a very very good job, the boys from the Jewish Brigade, a very good job, they were very useful. I don't know what we would have done if they would not have been in Germany after the war. They organised all the illegal immigrations, they organised everything. Of course we went to Bari, and then for some reason we decided to go back, there was no...just a lot of these things they very often misfired, it misfired.

Had they approached you to go on an illegal...?

Oh yes, oh yes. They went round and said right, now, we want so many, 100, 200, 300. Yes. And then the other one was when this Rushka Patawovska[ph] when she was on the illegal immigration, that was, oh, about March, April '45 - '46. And so what happened, they were supposed to get, which they did, they did get, the Jewish Agency issued everybody through the Jewish Brigade, a passport that they are Belgian Jews, and travelled and took them by train, and going home to Brussels, and from there they had arranged an illegal transport to Haifa. Because from Germany it was very difficult, very difficult. Funnily enough most of the illegal immigrations went via France, via Marseilles; the French were very good. The French Government, right after the war, of course it was under Leon Blum, he came back. He was in Buchenwald, you will find that when you interview Sam Lasky[ph] he will probably tell you he was together with Leon Blum in Buchenwald. It's always a mystery to me, I could never understand, why did they allow a man like Leon Blum, who was the Prime Minister before the war in France, take him to Buchenwald, as a Prime Minister, as a Jew, and he survived, and he came back to power after the war. And France was the only country in the world after the war who opened the doors for Jews, they brought out a law, any Jew who wishes to come and live in France can do so. And I believe that law is still until this day. In fact today, there's only two countries in the world where a Jew if he wants he can go there and live without any special permit or anything, is Israel and France. That was right after the war they brought this law out.

And yet you say the French weren't so good...

In Germany, no, in Germany they were dogs, in Germany. And of course as Leon Blum was again the Prime Minister of France, but they were very very...they co-operated very well with the illegal immigration, very well; they gave them full freedom. And of course what would happen, you go to Brussels, the idea was from there, once we are there, to travel to Marseilles, and then try to Palestine. But the British, they were no fools, they knew all about it. They waited on the border, on the German-Belgian border, when the transport arrived there, started checking, everyone says, 'There you are, here's my passport, I'm a Belgian citizen', they wouldn't have it. And took the whole transport back to Dusseldorf, and put everybody in a prison there which was every bit as bad as the worst concentration camp under the Germans.

End of F2918 Side B

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.....part of that transport?

Oh, I got involved when I heard that this Rushka[ph], she was on that transport. When we heard in Belsen that, that's in Bergen-Belsen, Belsen was the concentration camp, that she was there, and how the British treated them, how they starved them there, so right away I got together food, a parcel of food and I went there. Of course, she was in a real state, the conditions were just too terrible. I remember, it must have been already May, June, because I remember I slept outside, it was forest around there and I just slept outside because it was impossible to sleep inside. In the meantime the Jewish Brigade they said well we've got to do something about it, we've got to release these, there were about 300 of us there, we've got to release them. So what did they do, they managed to get us out to the station, put us on a train, and travelled to just maybe four, five kilometres before Hannover. Of course from Hannover to Bergen-Belsen was...that was the first main city, we could manage to get there, whether it was by truck or train or walking, whatever. And went in this train, and a few kilometres before Hannover they went to the train driver there, put the gun to his face, to his head, and says right, now here he should pull in on a side line, away from the main railway line. And he says, well, I've got order, I must go to Hannover. He says, 'Look, it's either you do it or we kill you, and we take over and we do it.' Well, he got frightened and he did it. And then they just said to us, 'Right, get out as far afield as you can, so you shouldn't be caught and not in groups, as individuals. Make your way to Hannover, and make your way back to Bergen-Belsen.' And everybody said what about...everybody had a bit of clothes, and so on. Don't worry, it will get there in time. Which, we found after obviously they had put it on trucks, and they brought it about a week later to Bergen-Belsen. And when we got...one by one we managed our way to Hannover to the station, then we realised how the British were after us; they knew we would be there, and they chased us. We hid ourselves all over the places, everywhere. Anyway, it took a few days, we one by one made our way back to Bergen-Belsen. Oh it was quite a...

And you were part of that? You had been up there...

Yes yes, it was quite an ordeal, yes yes. Again...

Was anyone caught, were people caught?

I don't think so, I don't think so. If anybody would be caught they wouldn't bother; they were more concerned to get hold of the whole lot. They were not interested in maybe just...they caught I should imagine the odd one, so [INAUDIBLE]. So what to do, put the...they were concerned with the whole group and they wanted to know who organised it and so on. No the Jewish Brigade were excellent, they were excellent. And it was well planned. They could have pulled them out right after the war back to Palestine, but no, they left them there, and they did a very very good job.

How interested were you to go to Palestine? Was it something that you fancied doing, or just...you didn't know?

Really, it was no definite motive of why, how...we knew all right, we were brainwashed quite a lot by the different leaders who came from the head office, from Jerusalem, from the Jewish Agency there to...oh you must go, this is the only place and so on. But to be honest, if you ask me whether we really knew what we wanted, where we wanted to go, we didn't, we didn't. It was a case also of like, follow the sheep; one goes... You go, I will go as well. Whether I am right to go there, wrong to go there, whether I want to go there. Oh, come on, let's go there. But looking back now, I feel with the Jewish Agency, the job they have done, that's the first taste which we had where we realised that if we are going to rely on anyone at all in the future, is on ourselves. Because between all, they had the UNRRA, they had the American, joint came, and the Jewish Relief Agency, the Central British Fund, everybody got busy. But the practical work, the whole business of giving us a parcel of food, another tin of chocolate and cigarettes, and [INAUDIBLE], but nothing practical. Practical way, as far as our future and so on, we could only rely on the Jewish agency. Which it was a case of, which it proved, until this day and always will be, we can only rely on ourselves. They were good, they risked their lives many times; they knew what they were doing was illegal many times, but they felt, I am a Jew, it's a job, I've got to do it, and they did it. Regardless whether they are going to be caught. Oh they did many many, got involved in many illegal acts, and it was still martial law, it was...I mean there was...you weren't a free person to go where you want and do what you want and so on. It was still military controlled. Of course we came back, and then we got back to normal again, meeting up together.

Were there any sort of like Jewish activities at all?

I was just going to say that. Unfortunately there was no Jewish organisations. The only thing what was set up in Bergen-Belsen not long after the liberation was a yeshiva, that was the only thing. Yes, they...and they tried to bring in...they meant well, they wanted to bring Judaism back, they knew that most of us were grown up, I mean apart from the war years, but most were very very young when the war broke out, they didn't know much, they wanted to bring them back. Which served a purpose.

Who ran it?

Mainly from America, American Jews. Today probably you will call them the Lubavitch, I don't know, I don't know. It was all supported through American joint, yes. All the books, the siddur and trillinmol[ph], talaysim[ph] whatever, everything came from America, everything from America.

Even though this was in the British...

Oh yes, well it doesn't matter, the American joint...they worked all over. They were free to go... You see the British Jewish Relief worked in the British zone only, because after all they...I mean here they didn't have themselves very much, so they couldn't spare, but they felt a duty, which they did...they were very good, they were very very good, they did their job, they did it in a practical way; they probably went about it more than the American joint. But the American joint, they were over Europe, especially in Germany they really did very well, probably 50, 60 per cent of

the food we got was from them. All the parcels we got from the American joint were far better than we got from the Red Cross, more useful. Naturally everything was, the meat in tins, whatever, everything was stamped 'kosher' and so on. Yes, that was very good. But otherwise there was no other society.

Was there any social activity at all?

Not really, not really.

Any entertainment, pictures, or...?

That they brought in, yes, they brought in, they organised concerts for us, yes. But a man who did really a very very good job there was Josef Rosensaft, only a little fellow, in fact he got married in...he met somebody in Bergen-Belsen there and they got married, and his son, Menachim Rosensaft...of course from there he went to America, he died a few years ago, he did a great lot. He was in charge, he took the interest of taking care of all the residents of Bergen-Belsen. He was in charge of just seeing that the food is distributed, that everybody has a hot meal every day and so on. I mean his son, Menachim, he's now a member of the Jewish Agency in America. He was the founder in America of the Second Generation. But now he's...you know when several of the American Jews went to Stockholm to meet Arafat? Now he was one of the delegation.

Oh, yes.

I remember when he was born, because he was born in Bergen-Belsen after the war, yes, when he was a baby. I met Rosensaft, he came several times a year to Israel from America, and he always put an announcement in the 'Jerusalem Post' that anybody from Bergen-Belsen who wants to meet him, he always stayed at the Sharon[??] Hotel. I met him there many times there, to meet him and chatted with him. Because I knew him very well, I knew him very well, a nice little fellow, very nice. And he tried to organise the best he could. It was difficult because it was a transit camp; you see nothing was steady, nothing was... Of course at the end I got a letter from this relation, Friedland[ph], from here, to say right, I must stay there, and it shouldn't take long before we get all the papers and so on. And I am born August 20th 1928. I says, what's all this, '28, [INAUDIBLE]. And what we had, everybody who came, whether you stayed a day or a year in Bergen-Belsen, it's the UNRRA office, they were in charge of the administration, the registrations, of everybody and so on. And the woman, a tall, fine woman, had to be Jewish, a Canadian woman, she was in charge of the whole administration of the UNRRA office. A charming woman, very nice. And she started to make, it was up to her to get all the papers through, get bookings, making all the...get the permit to come through in London. And everything had to go through the Allied control office in Berlin, everything had to go through them. Because it wasn't so easy. You see, there were thousands of Nazis who wanted to get away, and many many did get away, as Jews, as Poles, as one [INAUDIBLE] or another. They were clever enough and they got away. And the Allied forces knew about it, and they were very careful, very strict, but how strict they were, many still got away. Because it was so easy for anyone. for instance you had Ukrainian Nazis, Lithuanian Nazis; they could have got into any camp. Because you had transit camps

not just from Jews, you had transit camps of all the nationalities in Europe, and from all over the world, from everywhere, and they could go in there, throw their uniform away, you go in there, and he is already a flichling[ph], which means a stateless person; it's like was and everybody else. And many did it, and many got through. That's how you find now in America and even here how they got here, the same way. They went over, they went, hundreds of them. It was the easiest thing in the world to do. Now we stayed amongst Jews, but there were Ukrainians, there were Poles, there were Czechs, there were Hungarians. Hungarians volunteered to the German SS, Lithuanians volunteered to the German SS, Ukranianians volunteered to the German SS. But you have Displaced Persons' camps of all these nationalities. What do you do? They throw the uniform away, put a pair of trousers on and a jacket, that's it, they were no more Nazi, and they went all over. Of course you waited for a quota, they say right, so many Lithuanians go in January to America, so many Polish, so many Jews, so many Czechs, and they got there; so many came here, so many to Australia, so many to Canada, and they got it. That's when you hear now, that's how they got it. You hear, how did they get there, why did they let them in? Easy, quite easy. If they were clever enough, when they went before the investigation, which was, you could kid anybody. We had no passports, no birth certificates, we had nothing. All that we had, like in Belsen, in the UNRRA office, was a white card about that, a card, you had name, religion, parents' name, where you lived before, where you live now, that's it, finished. You could have said you were anybody, and they had to believe you. So I had mine there, the card, as Mendel Pialavsky[ph], mother's surname, father's such a name, born Sompolno[ph], Poland, 24th December 1921. I put it as I knew, exactly. If somebody is checking for me, looking for me. And in any case I had nothing to hide, so why shouldn't it be the truth? Then I get this letter, so I go to this woman, this Canadian woman, a tall woman, charming person, and I said to her, she spoke perfect German, they had to or else they couldn't carry on. And, 'Oh' she says, 'your relation is a very clever person. Oh you've got good advice.' I says to her, 'What do you mean?' 'Well, because there's a quota now to go for England, children under 18, they're supposed to go to study there. Whether they will allow 1,000 or 2,000 at this stage we don't know' she said, 'but at the moment we are sending there children.' That's how these groups came here, because of that. And they call came through UNRRA, UNRRA had made all the, everything, paid all the papers, everything, they did the lot, it didn't cost our Jewish people here one penny. The same with my relations, it didn't cost them anything. So, I says to her, what do I do now? 'Well' she says, 'you just have to make...you are 18.' So, that's fine. I knew the girl who worked in the office, because there was an index; I put an index card over the [INAUDIBLE] index card, file which she worked at, I said to her (her name was [INAUDIBLE] as it happens, I forget her second name), I says, '[INAUDIBLE], do me a favour, I've got a problem, would you change...my name, father's and mother's, and everything, the place of birth, everything's all right, but the date I must change.' Oh, she says, all right. So she brought [INAUDIBLE] a plain card, and the card, the original one, the one filled in, then I filled in, instead of 24th of the 12th '21, 20th of the 8th '28. We tore up the one, she goes to the office next time, she puts the other one in, and that's it, and there's nothing else to it. So, all right, so that job was done. And then, it was...it took a few weeks, I got a letter...well, a message sent, there were no letters, no post, message sent, they knew which block we are, where we are, to come to the bureau. OK, go there, this woman says right, now, I've got to go, and somebody from the UNRRA will take me to Hannover to the British Intelligence to be investigated. She

said, what we are concerned with mainly is, am I a Nazi and am I trying to get into England. So, of course they knew it happened, they knew, they knew it happened, they came, but go and try...they caught so many, but the majority got away with it. So, we go there, and I remember I had a very short hair cut, made a little tight jacket, made myself look as young as possible, because don't forget, in '46, I was then by that time I was already 25. So, three young men in uniform said to me, 'Speak English?' I shook my head, no. 'Sprechen Sie Deutsch?' Shook my head, yes. I said fine, they don't speak German, I don't speak English, we will get on fine. And they started with the perfect, cultured German, like they would be born and educated there, perfect! So I realised...but they didn't bother me as I couldn't care less if I go to England, or if not, so what. I knew very well they're not going to send me to prison for it, either they say yes or no. So, they started asking me, what's your name, where were you born. But this woman prepared me, she said, 'Now look, remember, they will ask you again and again and again, what is your age, when were you born, and so on. And then, now before the war' she said, 'you are only ten. Yes. Remember, ten, you started school at seven, you only had three classes. They will want to know, they will hammer you away, how many classes.' But the fact that I had in 1935, which I finished the school, they had similar to O-levels here, that's as far as I went to school, because after that you had to go to Gymnasium which was in a different town which we couldn't afford, I couldn't afford to go, so that was the end of it. And then they start, again and again and again. 'Why do you want to go to England?' Oh, I've got a relation. 'Why him?' I said it's the only relation I have. 'And what do you think of the Nazis?' [INAUDIBLE] Oh, then they offered...oh, 'Have a cigarette'. I said no, I don't smoke, too young to smoke, I don't want to smoke yet. Right. 'Have a chocolate.' Fine. 'Have a biscuit, a cup of tea.' Fine. 'What age were you born?' And, 'What was your father's name?' And, 'Where were you liberated?' And this went on and on for about two hours, and at the end, all right, I go. I didn't know, am I going, have I passed, have I not, did they catch me, did they not. But again, I wasn't worried in the least, didn't care. For me, it was a bit of fun. Oh it was great fun to go there, with all these three young British [INAUDIBLE] in these nice smart officers' uniform. All right, I go back the following morning to this Canadian woman, how did it go, I says to her, 'Well, you were right, they tried to catch me. "How many classes did you finish?" I said, three; I was going to go into the fourth but I didn't. And again and again and again, but I don't think they managed to catch me in any, and if they did then I don't know, but they didn't show that they caught me out on anything'. 'Oh this sounds good.' About four weeks later, she sends for me, this Canadian woman from the UNRRA, well her face was like this, white. She showed me, reads out a letter from the American...from the Allied Control Commission in Berlin. They want more evidence that, on two things, one, that I am the one who I say I am, Mendel Bialavsky[ph], and two, that this is my age! (laughs) And she went white. She says, 'What am I going to do?' She says, 'We have sent so many hundreds already to England, and nobody was under 18, and now it will spoil it for everybody.' I said to her, 'Look, I told you, I didn't hide anything from you, you knew about it.' Oh she said, 'I'm not blaming you', she's not blaming me. She says, 'What am I going to do now?' Are they going to investigate her, how much she knew about it, so on. I said, I really feel terribly terribly for her: more for her than for myself; I couldn't care less where I go, what... I said, 'Look, what can they do? I hope you're not blaming me.' 'No no, but what am I going to do?' She didn't know what to do. Then she said to me, tell you what, I should write out in my own handwriting to say, I Mendel

Geravsky[ph], born 20th of August 1928, lived in this place in Poland, my mother's name, father's name; state that this is my name and this is my age. And to go in to Bergen-Belsen UNRRA headquarters, and for him to stamp it, and we will send this to the Allied Control Commission, and we will see how it works. Fine. So I write it out, so I went in to the UNRRA headquarters. Well the room must be about four times the length of this room, with a big awful table, and there's a fellow there, short fellow, everybody was in uniform then, a big moustache, smoking his pipe, and I could see he is a Jew, could see he is a Jew. I showed this letter, he said to me, 'What do you want? What do you want me to do?' I said, 'Just put a stamp on it, from UNRRA number...' Each UNRRA office was numbered. Just stamp it from the UNRRA here and I will go to England. 'Oh' he says, 'is that all you want?' I said yes. I treated it like a bit of fun. I must say, looking back now that I was enjoying myself, yes. 'How do I know you're not a Nazi?' I said, 'What do you mean,' I said, 'a Nazi? I was in Auschwitz. Would I have been in Auschwitz if I was a Nazi? So what are you talking?' 'How do I know you're a Jew?' I said, 'And you're a Jew, aren't you?' He spoke perfect German. He says, 'Yes.' He didn't tell me that he is Jewish, but I said, 'And you are a Jew, aren't you?' He says, 'Yes.' I says to him, 'Well,' I says to him, 'look, do you know what a briss[ph] is?' He says, 'Yes, I had one.' (laughs) So I said to him, 'All right, you have your briss[ph] in England, I have mine in Poland. You couldn't have been in my briss[ph] so you don't know how old I am. I am telling you this is my age, and this is what I am, as I stand here.' He marched up and down and puffing his pipe. At the end he said, 'Right, give me the piece of paper', and he banged the stamp down, shook hands, he said, 'I wish you luck!' (laughs) I think he even said that, like, I don't think he knew much Yiddish, but he said, 'I wish you mazal!' (laughs)

[INAUDIBLE]

Yes, he didn't know Yiddish at all, he didn't know, he didn't. So he was one of those English Jews who are more...he was English first and last. But he was fair, he was fair; he knew very well that I didn't look 18. I mean during the war, all right, 18 or 26, we all looked skeletons, it didn't make any difference, you couldn't tell the age. But by then we already looked a bit more normal, so of course 25 and 18, it's not...it's not so easy, it's a big difference. And I go back to this Canadian woman, to the UNRRA office. She takes it. 'Oh', she says, 'thank God. At least we got this. It should work.' Sent it off to the Allied Control Commission, and two weeks later came yes, with all the papers, the lot. That's how I got away with it! (laughs)

Gosh, what a business. You see I suppose the others, I mean, although they might have been over 18 they were probably maybe just a year older...

Yes, or two.

Close.

They were all classed as a children's transport, and they didn't bother; all they were concerned, they let in so many children and that's it. A year older, a year younger, it was only a matter of a year or two years, that's all, that's all. But they came as a

group, they came as a number; I came as an individual, so it's different altogether. They didn't have to go through, like I did, through the British Intelligence, no.

End of F2920 Side A

F2920 Side B

I enjoyed that, yes. Yes, looking back it was...especially I kidded them as well! I must say the only time I kidded, or tried to kid the British, but I did it then, that time, yes. I never attempted any other time, so, this time I did it. And of course I got, all my papers were made, and military papers, the same tickets and all the papers and everything to travel and so on, as all the soldiers who were de-mobbed. There were thousands and thousands coming over every day from Germany back home. We travelled...

When was this, what month was it?

Well that was September '46, yes, September '46.

Had the girls...what had happened to the girls, [INAUDIBLE] and...?

Well, this Rushka[ph] eventually went, she got to... No, she was left, that's right, she was left in Belsen when I left, she was still there, and another one got married and lived there for some time. But quite a lot got married and children, hundreds of children were born all over the Displaced Persons' camps after the war in Germany, yes, a lot of them. This Sosha[ph] Rosenthal[ph], her first child, he was born there. And this...the other one, this Helen[ph] Fischer[ph] were there. There's no story how sad or whatever without a romance, they never see a film or anything, any documentary without, there was always a romance in it. My life was no different. She had a brother who I knew very well one time. I remember when he left Izbitza[ph] for Los Angeles before the war, a few years before the war, he sent papers for her to come over. So she said, well why can't we get married and we will go there as husband and wife on the one paper. I says, [INAUDIBLE], very nice girl, very very nice, I was very fond of her, very nice, but no way was I going to get married and just...and next to the bed in the room and that's it and then the following day to go with the container for a soup to the kitchen, because that's all, that's how life was. I says, nothing doing. I says to her, 'Look, your brother knows me very well, ask him to send papers in my name, we will go there like Menschen, more like human beings, not like animals.' Because that's how we lived, just existed like cattle there. And we will go there, and we will set up a home and everything, I'm all for it. Well, I don't know, whether she couldn't wait any longer, or whatever, it wasn't to be, it's all right, so one day this Schlomo Zotgolsky[ph], the tailor who made her coat, he got married in Bergen-Belsen, a girl named Hanka[ph], sweet girl, very nice, they're still married, still see them when I go to Israel. Lovely girl. And little Daniel, he knows when I took him there when he wasn't even two, I says to him, 'Who gave you the present of a car?' 'Hanka[ph]!. Yes, still remembers it, he knows it. Yes, Hanka[ph], very sweet. And a friend of his came from Felderfink[ph] to the wedding, and I go to the wedding and there, and see, well, my friend Helen[ph] Fischer[ph] is rather having a good time, enjoys herself with this Danyek[ph]. She's fine, OK. Anyway, a week or two after she says well, she's going to Felderfink[ph], she was going to get married to Danyek[ph] and then they will go to America, because again it will be easier from the American zone to America, like it was for me to go from the British zone to England. This is fine. And of course it took three days to travel, so I remember, she was already on the truck to take them from Bergen-Belsen to Celle, and from there they

got a train to Hannover, and Hannover to Frankfurt, Frankfurt to Munich, that was the journey in those days. I says to her, said goodbye to her, wished her good luck. I said, 'Have you got anything to eat, for the way?' She says, 'No.' I says, [INAUDIBLE], I says, 'You will never reach the place without food, how are you going to get anything?' So I said to the German [INAUDIBLE], just wait a minute, and I ran into my room in my block and took out one or two large loaves of bread and a packet of margarine, and I gave it her, and that was the best wedding present she had! Oh I've been twice. I went to her daughter's wedding to Los Angeles quite a few years ago now, I've been there other times, stayed with her. And I'm very pleased, she married a very nice fellow, very nice. My wife, she met them once in the wedding, at the same time in Israel, in Tel Aviv, we met them there. And the last time I met them was in 1981 at the world gathering of the Holocaust in Jerusalem, yes, I met them there. [INAUDIBLE] So that was the romance involved! No I just wasn't interested, wasn't interested, no. To me it didn't look normal, you see. Again, they were all younger. I mean the girl, this Helen[ph], she was maybe three, four years younger than I. Again, you see girls were lost after the war, felt lost I would say, more than a boy or a man. The war time, you see if you [INAUDIBLE] you travelled easier, you got about easier. For girls I felt very very sorry for them; they all looked for a home. It didn't matter whether the man is 20 years older older than them or whatever, and there were a lot of tragedies through it, a hell of a lot of tragedies, a lot of tragedies. It just...it was more through force of circumstances than anything else how it happened. And they wanted to belong to somebody where, you know, a lad will always [INAUDIBLE] all right. Naturally if there's somebody and they wanted to find a girl, so they find a girl, whether for a day, for an hour or for a year it didn't matter, then all right, had enough of you, off you go and that's it. A girl was different, they didn't want to run about, they wanted to be...they wanted to settle, they wanted to settle. I told her [INAUDIBLE] I understand, but, you know me very well, you know me from [INAUDIBLE], that if I say right, we go there and we will set up home and get married there, we get married; but just to get married and say right, I'm not going to...have another bunk in the room and that's it, no, no. I wasn't so desperate I'm afraid, no. So, I left...well she went to America before I did, got married, then went to America. This Rushka[ph] she was left there, Zosha[ph] was left there, and another, Mania[ph] another girl there, she was left there, but she married, and we arranged the wedding there, was fun with that wedding. We brought them together these two, and we had already a rabbi Oleski[ph], this Shru Oleski[ph], a nice, nice fellow, he had [INAUDIBLE], and he married a girl from Izbitz[ph], and it was so natural these four places[??]. The daughter married somebody who was a rabbi, and took him in, sat there studying, and they kept him, they fed him, it was a big thing. I've got a rabbi in the family, it's a very great thing. And right, every year another child is born and he kept studying and eating, and they kept him. And then he married two or three years before the war a girl from Izbitz[ph], and he became like a real typical resident of this little town. After the war, he survived the war, but then the poor fellow died, left the woman with God knows how many children, he went to America and died of cancer. He was still young. But he became the rabbi of the Jews of the British zone in Celle, which was where it was. Celle, the reason why he was there is because Celle was the British headquarters of the British Army; Frankfurt was of the American Army, Celle was the British headquarters. The Chief of Staff of the British Army was, the headquarters was in Celle. So he was there. Because when I came the second time in March to Bergen-Belsen so this Rushka[ph] she knew of

him, because when she went to see him and he says [INAUDIBLE], well with great respect they received him. So she said to me, 'You know, Shru Oleski[ph], he's a rabbi of the British zone, and he is in Celle. Come on then, we'll go and see him. So we went to see him. But she was a bit of a character; now she is a sick girl, her husband is sick, this Rushka[ph], but in those days she was really [INAUDIBLE], she was a character. We come there, he had already a shammash[??] at the door, he won't let us in, so she got hold of him and pushed him away, she says, 'Never mind shammash[??], we are from Izbitz[ph], from Izbitza[ph], and we want to see our friend from there.' He says never mind. So we go there. Of course when he saw us, it was a bit...was a bit down, I[??] felt a bit down in the dumps when he came out, he recognised me and he started describing and... Thought he would only live for about two or three years there. Exactly how my father[??] looked, and what sort of coat he wore, and everything, and talked with great respect whenever he saw him. Anyway he says, 'Come whenever you can' and so on, and we were in touch with him, but poor fellow, he got married there, and he died young, died young.

You say you arranged a wedding.

And we arranged this here, and this Oleski[ph] came, and arranged the wedding, and we baked cakes and we went to Bergen-Belsen, and we bought potatoes, we bought this, we bought that, and we made a wedding. Oh yes, we made a wedding all right, made a wedding. Anyway, they're now in Israel as well. And I must say that all of them are married, the children already, they all have grandchildren, every one of them, and I feel really pleased when I look back, I attended every one, to every one, each child's wedding I attended. I went especially. The last one was April last year, this Gershen[ph] who lives in Afulla[ph], yes, his daughter got married last year. She was already getting on. Anyway she had a baby a few weeks ago, he was on the phone to me, and that was the last one. I said to him, right, fine, I said, 'I've married all my children, I'm happy now.' Which I've done, I've attended everybody's...every child, I went to their wedding, never missed one. They came to us as well, this Gershen[ph] [INAUDIBLE] who lives in Afulla[ph] came to our first wedding, Stephen's[ph]. Yes. This is [INAUDIBLE], this is the family. [INAUDIBLE] the journey, I came here, travelled with the soldiers from Hannover along to Holland. I didn't know where I was travelling, but I guess now it was...and I know it was via Holland. And then went to France, and then to Calais, took the boat over to Dover. I was as sick as a dog, I remember that all right. I came into Dover. Did I know which train goes to London? I didn't know, because I couldn't speak a word of English. I just had a briefcase under my arm and a suit which the pocket was, instead of here was on this side because this Zosha's[ph] husband, this Jacob[ph], he made a suit for me from an old suit turned inside out, that's why the pocket was on the right side instead of on the left. No overcoat, nor a cap on my head. Come to Dover, I was...I had a letter that I should arrive, I was supposed to have arrived in London six o'clock, and this Friedland[ph] arranged for somebody to meet me there at the station, at Victoria Station in London at six o'clock, on the train from Dover. But by the time I found out actually, realised which train is going to London, the train already was gone, so I waited for the next one. Next one, there were thousands of people, all of these...there was no-one...by the time I moved, by the time I [INAUDIBLE], I wanted to make sure that this train goes to London, not a seat anywhere, nowhere at all, nothing at all. And I see one carriage, beautiful chairs, empty. I said fine, I'll go in. I

fell asleep, because I was asleep; I mean we had travelled two nights and a day, sick across the Channel as well. And somebody touched me on my shoulder, I wake up, somebody in a uniform. And I always had my, in an envelope all the papers, and whenever anybody asked me I gave them the envelope, here it is and that's it. So, I looked, I gave him the papers, he talks, he talks. I don't know what he's talking about, but just ignore it. Anyway, he gave me the envelope back and he went like this, OK, right. Anyway I found out after, it was first class.

Of course, yes!

It had these Pullman seats with all beautiful...it was first class. But I must say, he left me there, he left me sitting. He could have very easily made me get up and go and stand up somewhere. And of course when I arrived in London it was already ten o'clock at night. There was nobody there, for a change it was drizzling, dark drizzling; it was September 16th. And I look round, nobody there. A policeman comes up to me, starts talking, I go, shoulders like this, shrug my shoulders, I don't know. Then he took me to an office which after I realised it was the stationmaster's office. And again, I take out all the papers, there it is here. It was all in English, all the papers. He looked. So he said to me, 'Jewish' - that I understood already. 'Yes.' So he phoned up the Jewish Refugee Committee, I think it was in Holborn Street or whatever. Now it's the Centre of British Film[??], but in those days it was still the Jewish Refugee Committee, and told them, I've got this and this, and I've got so-and-so and so-and-so here, what do we do with him? So they said right, put him in a taxi and tell the taxi, the driver, to come up to them and they will pay for the fare. And that's it. And I remember the taxi driver, he walked round the Buckingham Palace and he showed me, 'Here, King', and he felt the...in those days there were no tourists like now, right after the war. So, 'Here the King', so, fine, so I see the King. And got to the Refugee Committee, they gave me a dinner they had for me, gave me something to eat, a bed, and the following day they phoned up to...I had the full phone number [INAUDIBLE] already, so they phoned up here to this Favish[ph] Friedland[ph] and told him I am there. So he said to them right, to put me on a train, and to phone him up which train I took, and they will meet me at the station in Manchester, which was the London Road, now it's Piccadilly. So they gave me, they typed out the address for me of the name Friedland[ph] here, and they gave me ten shillings, and they showed me this is half a crown, this is two shillings, this is a shilling and this is sixpence, and that was it. And by the way this is the only money anybody has ever given me, yes. That's the fortune anybody ever gave me in England. And they put me on this train, and in the meantime I got talking to a...on the train, I had a Polish-English dictionary that I brought with me, and to a...a soldier was demobbed, came to Manchester and travelled in the train all the time, and managed to talk to him somehow, [INAUDIBLE] the journey, told him, and he said to me, don't worry, he won't leave me until he sees that people meet me there, and if not he will put me in a taxi, but I shouldn't worry. So, all right. And there was another fellow sitting opposite me, a smart fellow with a moustache, with a bowler hat. And he could hear the whole conversation, he could hear; I told him where I was and what happened and so on, to this English lad. And this fellow sitting opposite me, never a word. When I got to the station here, so this Favish Friedland[ph] with his father, a man with a beard like this, and I just came out [INAUDIBLE] and this young soldier, this young lad wouldn't let me go, stood with me, and this other fellow opposite us

also hung around and looking around there for somebody. And then I heard in Yiddish, this Favish said to his father, 'Oh, [YIDDISH]', that must be him. So he calls me, 'Are you Mendel Biaravsky[ph]?' 'Yes.' '[INAUDIBLE]', I'm Favish[ph], this is my father.' So this fellow shook hands with me, goodbye, and I thanked him. And then what happened, the fellow opposite with the moustache and beautifully dressed with the bowler hat said to him, 'Oh Fabian[ph], where are you going?' And he gave him a lift, and he was Jewish and never said a word all the time. That was my first taste of a British Jew! Never said a word. And then of course after, I told him and I realised when he gave him a lift, I said, 'You know him?' He said, 'Yes', so I told him what happened, he never let on, throughout the journey. Perhaps he was frightened in case he has got to do something for me, and he's got to go out of his way or something. There you are. So you see... So in many many ways I feel it's a miracle that we managed to keep sane, that we managed still to tolerate people, still to respect people. What people did to us, and how, and then you see somebody like this and not a word, nothing, it's...really I think it's a good job that nature is the biggest cure, it's a good job. That's what I say, nature is the finest cure, better than any, than the most latest medicines, techniques or anything, you cannot beat nature.

What was your first impression of England, I mean you know, from what you saw of it? What did you think of it, and Manchester when you got here? [BREAK IN RECORDING]

To say whether I knew much, or...it really didn't sink in exactly what happened and so on, which is only natural. But, it didn't take me long to find out how disappointed I was, very disappointed. And I still can't understand until this day a man like this Fabian[ph], or Favish[ph] Friedland[ph], again your in-laws sure will remember very well, prominent man, great Zionist, very charitable, and was from mostly recognised Jewish families in Manchester, went out of his way and did everything possible, everything he possibly could to make sure that I come here, then when I came here, to put me in with his parents, old people, ultra Ultra-Orthodox, in a little house in Woodlands Avenue which, the house was all right, I had my own room, I'm not complaining about the house. Realising how would I fit in in such an environment, where every day, because I wasn't allowed to work; I came here as a child to continue my studies, under 18, that was the idea, so we shouldn't be allowed to work, so we shouldn't take jobs away off anyone, we shouldn't benefit from the State anything, in any way whatsoever. We are supposed to come here under 18, continue with our studies, and the British Jews are supposed to finance that, that's the conditions we came. So, every day I got sixpence a day, and went with the old man, he was over 80, to the son's warehouse in Princess Street, and all right, in the morning he gave me the breakfast. Actually the first thing I did was, I think I mentioned to you, before I came didn't I, didn't I put down I went for the tefillin. I knew I'm coming to an Orthodox family, I knew that.

You haven't mentioned it, no.

And so, before I came, of course I had already a yeshiva in Bergen-Belsen, they had the tefillin, talaisin, siddori[ph], everything sent by American Jews, although it was the British zone but it was all American. And, to give us, whoever wants it, there it is. So, knowing I am coming to an Orthodox family, I felt out of respect I would come

with tefillin. I go there, and say right, I'm going to England, I'm going to stay with Orthodox people, I don't want to arrive without tefillin; it would be...I knew it would be the biggest disaster for these people, right? A shangitz[ph] comes here without tefillin. So, what do they say, they want four English pounds for the pair of tefillin.

Who asked you for that?

The leaders of the yeshiva, the Orthodox people at the yeshiva. I said, 'Four English pounds?' I said, 'You get them free.' 'Oh yes, you can have it free', if I come and live with them in the yeshiva there, then I can have it free, but otherwise I must pay four English pounds. So I says to them, 'I haven't got any, I've never seen an English pound, where do I get four English pounds from?' 'Well you cannot have it.' And I didn't get it. I said to them, all right, and they didn't give it to me. So like I told you, when we went there for Pesach, for the rations, and they only gave us, which I could see very well that was in April 1946 that it wouldn't be enough for two days, never mind for eight days, I said, 'Is that all we're getting?' 'Well yes. But if you come here, you can have everything you want.' And they probably had enough supplies for Pesach, sent there, not for eight days, for eighteen days or maybe more, so much. There was no shortage, no shortage. American Jews were not, they were not short of anything then. They looked after us, they did it very very well in this respect, with parcels and food and everything.

But they wouldn't give you enough food to have in your own place?

Oh no, no. Not when there were four of us in the room where we lived. So what do we do? We just went to Bergen, because Bergen-Belsen was this Displaced Persons' camp, and Bergen was the village. We went there, we got told[??], by then, they had already bread, they had already enough, and we gave them coffee and they made us [INAUDIBLE] like that with all sorts, and that's it, and we had to live on it, and you do. Give us a box of matches for four for a week, maybe two kilo of potatoes and a tin of this, a tin of that. So, I had no option, we couldn't go and buy the food for Pesach. Whatever we didn't get we couldn't and that was the end. The same was with the tefillin before I went. No. Because when I arrived here, so I told them, I said look, I haven't got any tefillin; I went there but they wanted money, wanted four pounds, they wouldn't give me. 'Oh don't worry.' They were nice people, the old people, and they.....

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....any tefillin, because there was nowhere you could buy. When I went there they wanted me to pay for it, and of course I didn't have the money. Oh he says, it's all right. He knew, he had it ready for me. Oh yes, yes, had it really. Still got them, still got them. And this auntie, the old girl, she had already made herself, put on the [INAUDIBLE] for me. Yes, oh yes. So, I have nothing against their religion, but I must say I was far far far from it, far from it. In fact, by the time I travelled around for about a year and realised what had actually happened, I must say in my own mind I felt, well that's it, for me nothing exists. Never did I ever dream I would ever go near a synagogue or anything at all, anything. I mean I'm glad that I didn't continue that way, that I broke away from that, because. I mean for the fact that I went back to the religion, I have benefited from it, yes. Probably that enabled me to have a respectable family and so on. I'm only too glad[??] about it. But I could never be Orthodox, I think.

But at the time, just after the war you were completely...?

Completely, completely disillusioned. It's like, if you remember Simone Vey[ph], when she said, what is the definition of a Holocaust survivor? Somebody who was abandoned by God and man. And that's exactly how I felt, and that's exactly why I feel the definition of a Holocaust survivor, completely, yes. There are one or two who came over very young and turned Orthodox. Why, because some of them came from very Orthodox families and when they came here they asked to go to the yeshivah, because their father was a [INAUDIBLE] there, maybe they had an older brother who was a [INAUDIBLE], so they continued. The odd ones, the odd ones. I know some of them went to yeshivah and then when they came out, when they got married they were even worse than those who didn't go to yeshivah. But the odd ones stuck to it, that's all right, there are always exceptions, but the majority of us, traditional yes, but Orthodox, no, no. But I never expected, I felt, no, that's it, it's all over, the whole thing is a lot of boloney. Which was natural, natural. Again you see I couldn't be guided just like a kid, I was old enough to make my own mind up. I mean I didn't need anybody to tell me, anybody talking me to talk me into anything or out of anything, I had my own mind. So here I come to a family where I had to go to daven[??] three times a day, and...I realised...in the beginning, when I daven[ph] quick, so the old man stands there and he says, 'Hmm...' he says - because he only spoke Yiddish - 'I have daven[ph] already for about 80 years and I don't daven[ph] as quick as he does'. He was more interested in to see that I daven[ph] properly than what happened to me. If I started saying anything, what happened to Poles then, just wasn't interested. Because they were Orthodox and they felt if they started going into it, we may bring God into it, and it was God's will and that's it. He wouldn't [INAUDIBLE]. I mean they have lost their whole family, I am the only survivor from all their family, and they came over maybe five, six years before the war, the son brought them over from Poland, and very very highly respectable people from Poland, the whole family. And hardly asked, have you heard any chance of this one, or of that one, or what. Nothing, nothing. God wanted it that way, that's how it had to be, that's it. And realised, so, if I daven[ph] quick, he davens[ph] already so many years and cannot daven[ph] as quick as I. All right. So next day, what do I do? I daven[ph] slowly. So the old girl says, 'Why are you davening[ph] so long? The porridge is

getting cold.' And that's how I...that was my home. I was terribly terribly terribly disillusioned with Fabian or Favish Friendland[ph]. I felt he did the greatest injustice to me. All right, I appreciate it, and I know the man meant well. He didn't need to bring me, he didn't need to take an interest in me, but he did, he brought me here. He felt he will rescue me from living in a camp. But having done that, what does he achieve for me, what has he done for me? Put me in with old people, fanatics, and they were fanatics. The old woman gave me sixpence every day, when I went with the old man to town, to sit in the son's warehouse there.

And what did he do, what was he?

He had a big textile warehouse in Princess Street. He was very very comfortable man, very respected, comfortable and highly thought of man, no question about it. In fact when I started business, people would say well who are you, what are you, and so on. They didn't know me, I mean I was a stranger, who was I? When I said, oh, I'm a relative of Fabian Friendland[ph], he brought me to England, that was many times good enough. Yes, I got respect immediately, because he is my relation. He was my identity in many ways, no question about it.

And what would you do in the warehouse?

Nothing, nothing at all, no. Oh he made sure that I don't do anything, so he shouldn't have to...in case I get involved and he will have to give me...then I would become part of it. You know he wasn't interested to take me in or anything. No, it was a good job as well, a good job as well, otherwise probably I would be a packer for the rest of my days. I realised it's no good. I started...things went through my mind of how do I get out from here, how do I get away from here and back to Germany? The problem was, I didn't come over with the transport so I wasn't [INAUDIBLE]. So it wasn't so easy for me to say look, I want to go back. If I had come over like with the transport, I want to go back there, I don't like it here, they would just send me back. Here, the same time I didn't want to upset the people either, either this Favish Friendland[ph], the son, or the old people. Why? Because before the war they sent us for Rosh Hashonah and for Pesach half a pound, ten shillings. I remember seeing it in a registered envelope, yes, the ten shilling note, and a sack of old clothes every year. For that I felt I've got to respect the man. But, I wasn't allowed to work; there were not even classes like today. They didn't say, we will send you to a private teacher. Those who were in hostels, they brought in teachers and they taught them English.

So you were getting nothing.

I didn't get anything. They weren't bothered how I am going to...whether I learn the language or not. When I came in, they showed me, this is your bedroom; it was only a very small terraced house, two up and two down. The bedroom, and in the wardrobe they had a coat, a navy coat with a navy and white striped suit, which was about three or four sizes too big for me, and somebody, a relation of theirs, a tailor, an old tailor made it to fit, and that came to [??] a rich man, who brought the orphan [??] to England. When I looked at this I felt, what do I do, how do I get out from here, and how do I get back? My only...all that went through my mind, I must get back. [INAUDIBLE] an Orthodox person, they wanted to make me [INAUDIBLE], show

how to learn to speak English or write English, they were not interested. No. As long as I daven[ph] three times a day. Anyway, I probably would have gone back, but [INAUDIBLE] a week or two weeks most after I came I met...well this young girl said to me, maybe you've got more relations here. I said, 'Have I? Who is my relation? I don't have more relations here.' I knew I have got one, an uncle Tsudik[ph], which was my grandfather's brother, but unfortunately when I came here I found not shortly before that he died. He died, he lived in Leeds, he died. So he's gone. So who is the other relation, I didn't know of anybody else. 'Oh, my sister Bina[ph]', who happened to be the Bina[ph], it was my wife Marie's[ph] grandmother, who she lived with. Of course, her father, well she...through circumstances or whatever he lost her father when she was a very young age; her mother was an ailing woman, and so herself and the mother lived with the grandparents in 28 Peru[ph] Street. So, go there, and also they talked...well she was...the sister was the only one who talked Yiddish; the rest, nobody would say a word of English, so...

Had she married an English man?

Very English, yes, oh yes, yes, very English. Great gentleman, now is a grandfather, great gentleman, but he was an English, three, four generations, great gentleman, nice man. I would say had more feeling for me that the whole Friedland[ph] family, yes. And the grandparents were poor people, Marie's[ph] grandparents were poor people. The rich[??] people had a coat and a suit, old coat and a suit, three sizes or four sizes too big. And when she introduced me to her sister, another relation, who was really my mother's first cousin, what does she do? She only had one pair of shoes that were decaying[??], they were not new shoes either, with her own [INAUDIBLE] she took me, I still remember [INAUDIBLE] the small shoe shop, she took me with her own coins[??] and bought me a pair of black lace-up shoes.

Who did that?

That's the new relation, the poor relation.

What Bina[ph]?

Bina[ph]. So there it is you see. She could see, she said, 'Have you got any [INAUDIBLE] in Yiddish she asked me, I said no. So she took me [INAUDIBLE] another pair of shoes. But the rich relation didn't do it for me. So, well many times I think if I would have come over with the transport as I could have done, I would have been far far better off, far better off, yes. So, every week...of course the son was a marvellous son to the parents, marvellous. I don't think there's another son, he was the only child, I don't think there's another child like it. I mean he came to see his parents seven times a week, never missed, and the summer[??], shabbat[??], when shabbat was out, eleven o'clock, by twenty past eleven he came to see, to make sure that his parents are all right. Because he knew they won't phone, they won't do anything shabbat[??]. So they, always about lunch time he came. And his father was such a fanatic, [INAUDIBLE] very very strictly Orthodox kosher home. He lived in 115 Belliode[ph] Road, a beautiful double-fronted house opposite Grand Lodge[ph] here, opposite the park, a beautiful house. No, he might have had three children, but could have found room for me as well, he had enough bedrooms. But they didn't. So

every Sunday he came, and he waited, when I went upstairs to my room so he ran after me and he took out two pounds and he gave me, so that his mother shouldn't see. If his mother would see she would be frightened that me make me too rich and he will become poor! Yes, this is the home I had, this is what he put me into. So I felt well, it's...as I say, in many ways, even after I was married, he treated me no different than his own children. As far as being concerned about me, and so on, very much until it came to his pocket. And when it came to his pocket, no. So, after a few weeks I thought, well this is no good. I've got to get out from here or, I've got to get some work, I must get permission to work, otherwise I will go mad. And by then of course as I went, once, twice, three times to...I felt more comfortable when I went round to this Bina[ph] than there. Also strictly a kosher home but more modern, did not...were not fanatics, and they had a big family, little children came and so on, and they were more concerned.

Were you able to talk with them?

Well only with one, with this...with Marie's[ph] grandmother, Bina[ph], yes. The rest, no. Then of course I met Bina's[ph] grand-daughter, Marie[ph], who became my wife after, and I would say, she was very good, she took a great interest in me right away, took me out, paid for me to go to the cinema, she paid for me, because I didn't have any money, paid... She didn't have much either, I think she only got five shillings a week.

What did she do?

She was a hairdresser. She didn't have much, but paid for me.

How old was she when you met her?

Eighteen, nineteen, yes.

How did you manage to talk to her?

Sign language, simple as that, sign language. And once or twice when we went to the cinema, I didn't know when it began, when it ended, I didn't [INAUDIBLE] continuous. When I had enough of it I said let's go. Well, being a nice young lady so she said all right, she came, let's go, we went. After a few times her grandmother said to me, 'Mendel' she says, 'we see, Marie is upset.' I said, why, what have I done to her? She goes, pays for you to go to a film, and half-way through you go home. So I said, what do you mean? I said I didn't go home, I said, it's finished. Then I realised, I didn't know; she didn't tell me and I didn't know. So, OK, I said [INAUDIBLE], 'Look, will you tell her, that to tell me when it's finished and then all right, I won't go in the middle of it.' Anyway, I realised well, maybe there is a purpose of staying here, maybe there is something there. I had already at least somebody to go out with and so on. So I applied, I forget now how I did, how I applied, I think from my solicitor, Harry Miers[ph], to the Home Office for permission to take a job, and weeks after, and they granted me permission. So my first job, my father was a watchmaker, I knew already part of the trade, so right, so I will...I forget now who it was, I think someone called Solditz[ph], son, Maurice Levy, a nice fellow, a very nice fellow, he

knew Mr Falder[ph], Nick Falder[ph] in Cheetham Hill[ph], opposite Darder[ph] Street. He was a travel agent and a watchmaker. In fact his grandfather was the first travel agent in Manchester.

Yes, yes, Bahova[ph], yes.

Yes. This Jack Farber[ph] is still connected with [INAUDIBLE] now, it was his father.

Yes yes, I know.

That I was there when Jack was de-mobbed and came home and came also in to the business. Very nice, I got two pounds a week, it was good money already. So, at least I'm out, out in the morning till at night, fine.

How many days a week did you work?

Five days, five days. Saturday it was open but I wouldn't go on shabbat. Sunday was closed. Five days a week.

And what were you doing?

Repairing watches, yes. He taught me. Very nice fellow, very nice, nice people, and he spoke Yiddish quite well. That's how I went to work for him. Nobody took any notice or interest how am I going to learn English, no, couldn't care less. As long as I davened[ph], that's all that mattered. And, I carried on there. Well of course as soon as I started earning, bringing home the two pound - either two pound, two-fifty a week, two pound ten shillings a week I'm not too sure, maybe £2.10s - the old man had a little safe in the front room, he took the money from me and just gave me a few shillings and saved it. I made sure that I don't spend it all, because if I spend it, then if I need anything in case there's something, they have to give me. But oh yes, it was all worked out, yes, the strategy was fantastic. [INAUDIBLE] always says well, I say, thank God, if one day the old woman took ill! (laughs) And, how am I going to get out from there? So, at that time, I think by then I agreed to get engaged already, or engaged already I don't remember. But when I started to earn some money I started to, I paid somebody in Defordshire[ph] Street, some fellow, he gave me some lessons in English. I paid him half a crown a lesson. But of course after a few lessons I realised half a crown, before I know where I am, my two pounds had all gone, it didn't go very far, so I had to give it up after a time. I think most of my learning of the English, of what I did learn, well it's mainly due to Marie[ph] than anyone else; she certainly brought the best out of me where English goes. And other things as well, other things as well, yes. She tried me to make me into an English gentleman as well I must say; she did her best, she did her best, I've no regrets about her. I would say she did more for me probably than the whole Friedland[ph] family. And I wouldn't say that oh, she did it because she expected to...thank God she got got somebody she could get married to, I'm sure that wasn't, didn't come into her mind, she just...she I would say out of the goodness of her heart, took an interest. So I started working, and then again when I could speak already a few words of English and I managed already to have conversations with people, then again a great

disappointment came. Very very bad, terrible. The interest by the average Jewish family showed in us, and when I say in us I mean now I know I can speak for every one of us; I mean as you interview, I don't know whether the others have got the same, whether you find everybody has got the same story to tell you, where...absolutely disgusting. All right it's true they didn't know much, but by then, the films they have seen, all the newsreels of it and so on, articles in the papers, soldiers came home, they liberated the camps, they knew. There was no excuse for it, they knew. And what happened? When they started asking, it's all right, so I didn't...I wouldn't...I wanted to talk; yes, I was dying to talk. You see because after the war, when I was lying, hardly was able to move, in the bunk, what went through our minds? Enough bread to eat and to tell the people what happened, and I wanted to talk, and nobody was prepared to listen. You started to talk, immediately, invariably, one after another, 'Well yes, we know it was hard for you, but we also had, we had a war here, we had the Blitz, we had rations, and let's make a cup of tea', and that was it. Every one. I said, what the hell is happening, what sort of people are they, what...do they know, or don't they want to know, are they interested, are they not? You see in this respect those who went for America were far better off than we who came to England. These in America, to start with almost everyone could speak Yiddish, they were still from the old school there. The Americans today, their children they understand Yiddish but they don't speak the language, but at that time all the old generation they would speak Yiddish. Everybody wanted to know, have you met by chance an uncle, a cousin, a brother, a sister, so on; they asked, they took an interest. It's a different atmosphere altogether, different altogether. In fact this fellow who spoke at the...last year in July, at the Conference, Ben Helfcot[ph] of America, what was his name...Mick or Mich or something like this, Mick I think. Anyway we went to these workshops. He happened to be in the same workshop as me, and Ben Helfcot[ph] was the chairman, and he said to Ben, why didn't you do this, why didn't you...we do this, we do that, you haven't done, you haven't done anything; you haven't started this, you haven't started that. So, I said to him, I said, 'Now look, now don't be so clever.' I says to him, 'Do you realise, we came to England where the people were British and then Jewish. They didn't have a clue, they were not interested in us. They asked us questions, what was the weather like in Auschwitz? They asked questions, did they send you to school when you were young, did they send you to school in the camps?' These sorts of nonsense, stupid questions, but they did ask; they didn't have a clue. Or, they didn't want to know, I don't know. They couldn't have been so stupid, by 1946 they couldn't have been so stupid any more, it's impossible. So I told him I says to him, 'You came there, you came to your own people, but we didn't. It took us 40 years to educate them to listen to us and to ask questions. And this is actually the truth, it took 40 years until they had films of the Holocaust, the shoran[ph], and all these things, then they realised, now they want to know. But it took 40 years. I said, 'And you, it took you four days not 40 years. The moment you came, people rallied around you, they wanted to know. So don't be so smart, that we didn't do.' Now we're doing it. I mean, what we're doing now, with the archive of the Second Generation, they started already, in fact in 1981 we had our first gathering of the Holocaust survivors in [INAUDIBLE], they came already with two or three hundred of their adult children. Well, what they cannot understand, we came here as children, were youngsters. All right, I got married in '48, I was the first one. I was older already enough to marry, the rest were all children, they didn't marry till ten years later. But in America, a lot of them

married in the Displaced Persons' camps in Germany, and hundreds of them went already with families to America, so by 1981 they had children already of 30, 40 years of age, and they couldn't understand you see. So this is the difference between us coming here and them going there.

Yes, because as you say, mainly it was children that came here, children and...

Yes. I am the oldest, and I am the first one to be married here.

Did you live with Fabian's[ph] parents until you got married?

No, no no. So as I say, it's a terrible thing to say, but I felt that way, thank God that she took ill. So I turned around to Fabian[ph], I says to him, 'Favish[ph] now look, your mother is ill.....

End of F2921 Side A

F2921 Side B

So by then, by that time I was already engaged, so we were engaged already, we got engaged the 9th of March I think, 1947. Yes, yes. So, I said right, I said to Marie[ph] well - and the son, Favish[ph], he agreed, I've got to... He didn't say come and live with me, oh no no no, God forbid, no no, he didn't say that, no. I mean it's not fair, the man is dead by now, he's been...in many ways he's been...his concern for me in many ways was no different than for his own children, that's why I could never make out, never. So he didn't say, so he says to me, 'Where are you going to live?' I says to him, 'Well, funnily enough' I said, 'Marie's[ph] Aunti Flora[ph].' She was unmarried[??], just maybe a couple years she was married[??], had a young child about a year or so old, and I said, 'I think she will take me in'. He said, 'Well what to do, how, what do you mean?' He was wondering, will I have to pay or not. But by that time I worked, I changed my job already, to another watchmaker, Myer Cohen[ph], and there I earned already five pounds a week. I said well, I'm earning five pounds a week as you know, and Flora[ph] will keep me if I live there with food, with everything, for three pounds a week which, well this is very nice, very nice. He said, 'Well OK, fine.' Very good. A young married couple, not [INAUDIBLE], they lived in a small semi, and not many would have had a stranger living there and so on, but both of them, her, her husband - she is alive; unfortunately her husband died about four, five years ago - it was very good, they both treated me like if I would be their own family, they couldn't treat me any better. Yes.

But how were they related to Marie[ph], was that Marie's[ph]...?

Marie's[ph] auntie, Marie's[ph] mother's sister, yes. In fact she is the only one of the whole family, apart from their brother, because there were five sisters, she is the only one still alive, she's now in Leicester with her daughter, and very nice. For the first time I had a home more or less of my liking.

Where did they live?

In Duckworth[ph] Road, off St. Anne's[ph] Road, Prestwich, yes. And, we carried on there until we got married.

How had you found the next job with Myer Cohen[ph], how had you found that?

In a way, quite good, because I realised the man was an exceptionally good watchmaker, excellent, and I definitely learned the trade there. I learned the trade there, yes.

How did you know of the job?

Again it was in a comment by somebody. Oh that's right, I think that's right Marie[ph] did somebody's hair, whether his wife's, or a relation of his, and she talked about it, the job I've got and how much he earned. Oh she says, I think he is looking for somebody. That's how it came about. And he will take me in, and he give me five pounds a week. Yes. And, that's great, five pounds a week; never seen so much money in my life. And he was very good, he taught me the trade, the people came in.

It wasn't a shop, it was a room in the Corn Exchange building. But he took out, he repaired to the trade, took out from the shops and stores and worked, and repaired it, and that's how it... People came there, I got on very well with them, got to know them very well and so on. And he kept saying - of course he was ill, had an operation, was off for several weeks and I ran the whole show for him - and he kept saying, well don't worry, when I get married he will make sure he gives me a living wage. I said great, marvellous, I've got the security already. Then we got married in 1928, the same day when Tanya got married.

'48.

'48. June the 29th, same day.

Really? The same day? Gosh.

The same day, yes. That's why she set that day, she wanted to marry in the same...just went down for[??] the Sunday when she got married, so she said, we want the same day. We said, all right.

Where did you marry?

Where the wedding was you mean?

Yes.

We got married in the [INAUDIBLE] shul, by the Rabbi Chestner[ph], a great gentleman, nice man, died years ago, fine man. And the reception we had was in the homes. [INAUDIBLE] just when Mrs Fulman's[ph] first husband was still alive, Neba[ph], he married, that's where I had the... Very nice. As far as her grandparents, they treated us no different; they were poor people, they treated us no less than their own children when they got married. Yes, they did what they could. I had nowhere to live. We went away to a holiday camp, somewhere in Bognor Regis I think, for a week, and came back, so, the grandparents gave us a room. Anyway, not long afterwards, in a week or two we found ourselves a little flat in the attic [INAUDIBLE] in an old house called 'Linwood'[ph].

Oh yes, yes.

It's still now Linwood[ph] the block of flats, that's where it was.

And what did you have there, what was it, a...?

A bedroom, a kitchen, and there was a sort of living-room, and it was adequate. I mean not the best of places; when it rained the roof was raining, the rain came in, it's all right. A few mice running around, yes. But it was all right. I earned five pounds, Marie[ph] earned about three or four pounds, so, we managed. It was big money then in '48. The rent was 17s.6d. a week, so it was all right. Then a week, two weeks, three weeks, four weeks after, I still got the five pounds a week from Myer Cohen[ph]. Then I says to him one day, I said, 'Mr. Cohen[ph], you know you told

me when I get married you will give me a living wage; well how about it? What are you going to do?' 'Oh yes yes, Friday I will see to it, I was going to mention it.' Comes Friday he gives me ten pounds, some document, I didn't know what it meant, didn't look at it. Came home and I showed Marie[ph], I said look, #10. Great. And I showed her the piece of paper, the card, then I realised then, it was the P45 and an insurance card. He gave me the sack!

Oh!

Yes.

And he never said anything to you, just gave you this?

No, no, just gave me this and said goodbye, and that's it, this was the goodbye. I was prepared to go back on Monday, expecting #10 a week, it's all right. Anyway, immediately I went to some of his customers, and I got on very well with them, very nice, Jewish or non-Jewish, and told them, and they were disgusted with him and they said to me look...I then had already my tools; yes, I managed to buy some tools. One or two tools funnily enough, this Favish[ph] Friedland who went to America in 1948 or '49, '48 perhaps, or maybe earlier, he went to America, and here you couldn't get any, so I told him, can you buy me some watchmaking tools, because here you couldn't get it, and he brought me back some. I suppose[??] anything, so I can earn enough and not have to complain.! When we got married, he didn't give me much. He gave me #20 wedding present, and he said to me, it's a custom in England that the bridegroom pays for the flowers and the taxes I think as well, so he gave me #5 or whatever, some money I forget now how much, to pay for that, and #20 wedding present and that was it. Of course, where I am going to live, or what, he wasn't interested, nothing at all, no. So, I went to these people and told them, look what he has done to me. Well, they were terribly disgusted with him, they says right - they knew I had got already tools, because I had already a bit of work on my own, otherwise I couldn't manage, with this #5 a week. In fact I would say, I probably earned #10 a week already on my own, having already in the flat where we lived a little bench and my tools, and already did some repairs. So I told [INAUDIBLE], they said [INAUDIBLE], it's fine, we will give you some work; all the easy work they will give to me, and the hard work for him, and more or less [INAUDIBLE]. I must say for the first week I earned more in one week than he gave me in four weeks, yes. But I hated it, I didn't like it, didn't like it. Who knows, maybe if I had stayed in it I would have been in a big way in the jewellery business now, I'll never know. But I hated it. And then of course, carried on, I carried on till what, about '49, then Marie's[ph] auntie, Auntie [INAUDIBLE], and an uncle of hers [INAUDIBLE] sister and an uncle [INAUDIBLE], they were going to start [INAUDIBLE] factory, where we needed #250 each. So, I said all right, very nice, I heard this, they were going to start the four of them, fine. The last [INAUDIBLE] her uncle Henry said no, he's not going to risk #250 with these two crooks, the father and son. So, I was fed up, I hated this, I said to them...oh, we were in Marie's[ph] grandmother's house, in this house in 28 Peru[ph] Street, I says to them, 'Well Henry, do you mind if I take your share?' He said yes, have it, it's all yours. I said, 'Well tell me, how much money did you have to put in?' He says #250. Oh, I says, I cannot do it. 'Well, perhaps #200.' I said, 'How will I have #200 [INAUDIBLE]?' This Favish Friedland's[ph] father's brother, who

died a batchelor in South Africa, and was quite a rich man then, and he left a will where there was so much to his father, and then there was a sister here as well by the name [INAUDIBLE], and so much to the father and sister's children. So, he came, he says, 'Well you know we've got a yerisha[ph] from Father's brother in Africa', he says, he will give me #200 from it. You see some of [INAUDIBLE], didn't matter. So, he gave me, right. So, I says fine, put it away, put it in the Post Office. I said, 'Now I've got #200', so he said to [INAUDIBLE], 'Well, Mendel' he says, 'if you have the courage to go with these crooks, I will lend you #50', and he did. I went there, started, but even then, that was 1949...

So what exactly did they start, what was it that they...?

Making shirts.

And did they have a place?

Yes, yes, in Townfield[ph] House, funnily enough next door to where I worked for Farbers[ph] in [INAUDIBLE]. Took a room there with a few machines, made up with other people's fabric.. And I never...the one thing even then, I had already enough sense about the whole idea, not to involve my name. I put this partnership on Marie's[ph] name and not my name, so I should be a free agent. But I went in, and after the first four weeks or so I realised I was dealing with crooks, that [INAUDIBLE] was right. The son was all right but the father (he's been dead a long time now, the son is still alive), he was a real old crook. So, I thought to myself well, learn as fast as you can, and as much as you can, and get out of it. One day I found out, that was already 1950, that he is trying somehow to buy myself and this auntie Mabel[ph] out, and somebody has offered to put more money in, and he would get some money out of it and so on. And so, I said well I had better go to this person and say look, do you want to buy my share. Anyway he found this out; unfortunately the way he found out is, I went to this Auntie Mabel[ph] and said to her, 'Look, let's go. He's got this fellow Goldman[??] who wants to buy our share. Let's ask for #1,000 each and he can have it, and let them buy us out.' She was stupid enough, stupid woman...nowadays there are clever women, as well as men; in those days a woman was still a woman, a man was in charge! And anyway they were not as advanced then as they are today. I don't see why there were not, why they shouldn't be, they're the same women now as they were then, their brains are no different; but the attitudes, from a woman in those days was different than a woman today. [INAUDIBLE], it's fact She goes to this Sylvester[ph], to this fellow, at night. I call her into my flat, because I live in the attic, and I told her, I said, 'Look, Mabel[ph], here's a chance to make a few pounds, and to hell with them, they can take it.' Because I knew I'm going to start on my own sooner or later. And so what does she do, she says, 'Good idea, good idea', she goes from my flat into this Sylvester[ph] and tells him what Mendel said. The following morning I go in, he says, 'You cannot come in'. I say, 'Why?' Because...Mabel[ph] told him what I want to do. 'You're not a partner here.' He says, 'Your wife can come in if she wants', but not me. I says, 'Fine, all right.' I never argued about it with this Auntie Mabel, no. It was a very difficult situation, which is still there, it's in the family and everything, I just...I didn't bother, never had it out, never fell out with her about it, no. So, there's one thing the war did teach me, is that it isn't...it didn't make me a materialistic-minded man; if I would have been

materialistic-minded, I don't know, I could have been maybe one of the richest men in Manchester today, but I never was, it never interested me. As long as I had enough, comfortable and so on, that's it. No, I've seen too much. I've seen too...I always have to think back to see the number of multi, multi millionaires where within minutes they were the poorest people. One day they were at the top and the next day, next time absolutely nothing at all. It didn't mean much, it didn't mean much, until this day. I'm not materialistic at all, I don't...I just don't believe in it. So I didn't bother [INAUDIBLE]. Anyway, I turned round to this [INAUDIBLE], I said, 'Look, I'm not interested now about Mabel[ph] any more, I don't want to know, you deal with her. But I want #1,000 now and get out, now.' No, no. Anyway we argued, we argued. We agreed #500. I said fine, I grabbed it, I grabbed it. And to the best of my knowledge this Auntie Mabel[ph], I mean she's dead now, until this day she never got her #500. She had a promise but never got the money! (laughs) Never got the money. Promise, promise, yes, but never got the money.

What had you been doing when you went into the shirt making factory?

I looked around, took a part, took an active interest, watched how it's being done, how a shirt is made, what it's all about. Oh yes, I learned the trade, I learned the trade. I wanted something different, because I hated to repair watches. And I felt, this is what I want, it was something I wanted, yes; I just wanted to trade, away from my relations, away from everything, away from everybody, so I can stand on my own feet, and that's it.

Yes. So when you were bought out of that, what did you do next?

Well I think that will continue next time, it's 3 o'clock!

[END OF SESSION]

My relation, Friedland, had a factory making [INAUDIBLE] in 25 George Street, Manchester. So, when they heard that I am finished there he says to me, 'What do you want to do?' I said, 'Well I'm going to start on my own. I've got #500, it's enough, making shirts.' So he says well, he's got a small factory in George Street, but he bought a factory in Bury, he's moving, so I can start there. Well I must say, I was quite happy, I felt, well, I've got a relation, a wealthy man, I'm all right. Perhaps I will be a millionaire sooner than I expected. But it wasn't to be. I didn't ask many questions, trusted, it felt all right, it was good enough an opportunity. And then he said all right, well we will start a partnership, so again I felt good to have Felian[ph] Friedland as a partner, can't go wrong. And he says let's see, the value of his assets, I put in #500 cash, his assets which were some machines which were not worth sixpence a machine, but it was money. We valued it; the assets were #350 so he put up, he took out a cheque for #150 and that was his share and he was a partner. I was still quite happy. And of course, towards the end of 1950, it started January '51, so he says, 'Well we had better start getting ready', so, all right. So he says to his son Sidney, to help in advertising in the 'Evening News' to find people to give me material, and make up for him, and getting, which, in the trade it was called 'cut, make and trim', they gave us long material and we made it, and we got so much for making.

Well I must say, I knew that I'm not going to become a millionaire out of my rich relation.

Was it shirts? Was it shirts you were making?

Yes.

And had the factory made shirts before that?

No, no no no, I started completely from scratch.

What had it done before that?

Aprons. I had a reasonable start, because the [INAUDIBLE] lady who worked...oh, opened the factory for us with these other partners, by the name Mrs. Holland, when she heard that I am going on my own, so she decided to come with me, we wouldn't stay with him, she would rather go with me. In fact she worked with me until she died, for many years. So, it went all right, I got work.

How many people did you have working for you?

Not many, maybe ten, no more.

And you managed to get an order [INAUDIBLE].

Yes, yes. Managed to get work. But I realised that I'm not going to get rich from it, I'm not going to even make a living out of it.

How did you get in work? Was it through adverts?

Through adverts, yes. It was quite common to do that then, quite common. And the first thing I found out that the machines what he valued at #350 were not worth #50; I had to get rid of them and buy, get new ones. But still, that was the asset. You see it's very difficult to...I mean one has got to bring it out and treat it the way how it was, how it actually happened, but in many ways, I mean it sounds like I'm making out like oh, he was the most terrible man, which he wasn't, he wasn't. But, call it [INAUDIBLE], call it greed, I don't know, I don't know. Because in general he was a very very generous man. Not to me, but in general, in the community he was known as a very charitable and generous man. So, well it happened, we carried on, and then unfortunately I took ill when our first child, Stephen was born, was at the end of December '51, I took ill, and I was in hospital for several weeks. The factory, he was going to close it because he was losing money. His own mother drove my mother-in-law crazy, her child was becoming poor from it. He didn't lose much, it didn't cost him much, and thanks to my accountant Mr Phillips, who insisted that he keeps the doors open otherwise I'm going to come out from hospital after maybe three months or four months, I will never be able to start again. Anyway, he forced him, and we kept open. And I carried on, in fact when I came out I realised it's no good; to make [INAUDIBLE] from somebody else, well, I may make a living I may not; [INAUDIBLE] with a partner as well through it. So, I realised then that, if it wouldn't

be for a man like him I would say I was conned in[?]. But, I wouldn't say that actually, I mean he didn't have it in mind, I am sure he didn't. But, on the face of it it looked like it. Well about...it was in the end of 50...started, I came back about May 1952, came back into the business, but by the end of '52 the beginning of '53 I realised, well, I've got to start making with my own fabric, and started as a business, which I managed, I did it. Fortunately there was a man by the name Morris Kingsley[ph], who was the most hated man; he was in a big way in the textile and [INAUDIBLE] and fabrics world, all kinds of trades. The most hated man in Manchester, and if anybody put me on my feet and helped me out it was him.

Why?

He trusted me. He gave me...

How did you get to come to him?

I knew there is a certain fabric which he has got, I found out through the trade, somebody from London bought and he was going to make shirts out of it. People laughed at him, he said this is for ladies' blouses for for shirts. I fancied it. In fact if anything I can say that I revolutionised the shirt industry in Great Britain. I was the first one to make a shirt with a soft collar, where in those days an Englishman wore the fruminade[ph] stiff collars, a shirt, you bought a shirt with two or three collars; that's how they were dressed then. And I was probably the first one which I can say that I revolutionised the shirt industry in this country. I went to him and I said to him, 'Mr Kingsley, I believe you've got this new[?] fabric.' He was a very rough diamond, very...'How do you know, who you know?' I said, 'Look, I found out and I fancy it.' He said, 'What do you do now?' So I said, I told him. 'I'm making up for somebody, but I don't like it, I'll never make anything. I want to start making my own clothes.' So he says, 'Well how many hundreds of pieces do you want?' I didn't have enough money to buy one piece, let alone[?] 100 pieces, I said, 'Can you give me ten yards, sell me ten yards?' So I said to him, all right. So, he says well, call in his warehouse Monday, he says, 'Give him ten yards, don't bother charging'. Wouldn't bother... It was only about 1s.6d. or 1s.8d. a yard. And within two or three weeks, at that time I made about, well, five or six hundred shirts a week, managed to produce, and within three or four weeks I realised that I've got to start producing, that was the end of '52 beginning of '53, I've got to start producing at least 10,000 a week to satisfy the demand, otherwise it's no use.

End of F2921 Side B

Then I go, I phoned up this Mr Kingsley[ph], I said to him, 'Mr Kingsley[ph], I want to come and see you, very important. I want to have a chat with you'. That was about October '52. I said to him, 'Look, the sample length I took from you, I did very well with it.' But, I said, so much so that I will need between then and February 1953, before I will get any money in, about #20,000 worth of material alone. I said to him, 'Tell me whether you trust me or not, because I'm telling you, I will not be able to pay you one penny until the following year, the 10th of February. I must be honest with you, I won't be able to pay you anything.' So, I says, 'And if you're going to trust me with all the lot, I will confirm whatever I sell. If I sell 10,000 shirts I will confirm 10. If you are going to trust me with half, I will confirm 5. If you are going to trust me with a quarter I will confirm...I will confirm two and a half. But if you're not going to trust me at all, well say so, but I must tell you I will not be able to pay you one single pound until February next year.' He looked at me and he said - I must have sounded too honest for him, because that man was not the greatest...I mean he was known as the biggest crook in Manchester in the textile trade, biggest crook. He says to me, 'Do you know what you want?' So I said yes, and I took out a list that big, that I want so many tens of thousands of yards in one design, some in another. He says, 'Right, give me the list and go, bugger off', just like this. So, all right. I went straight into...because he was in Asia[ph] House, 82 Princess Street, and my relation, this Friedland, my partner who was in 36 Princess Street. I go in, I says to him, 'Favish[ph], what do you think of this? I went to Morris Kingsley[ph]', told him exactly what I told him, and I told him exactly the answer he gave me, and I left him the list. 'Oh' he says, 'I wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw him. No, just don't trust him, [INAUDIBLE].' I know for a fact, he knew him very well, he didn't phone up and say well look, give me a chance or anything like this, no, because in case, he would probably say to him, well will you guarantee the money? No. So, he didn't say anything. Well, within virtually hours, in that time they still used to deliver in [INAUDIBLE], amongst all the warehouses, the centre of the city with a horse and cart used to deliver from warehouse to warehouse. His horse and cart with the name Hodgkinsons[ph] the carriers, started to bring in hundreds and hundreds of pieces of cloth. So, all right. I went to Ireland, to Belfast, got one or two factories making for me, one or two here, and then I got in touch with a factory in Stockport by the name Drinkwater, he made 500 dozen, which is 6,000 shirts a week, and I carried on. Of course, by 1954, well it was...February 1953...

Did you enlarge your place at all?

No, there was no room there, no room there, no no.

So you were really farming it out to...

I more or less used it as a warehouse than anything else then. I had a few machines, but I had other people making it for me, and so, managed.

And who were you supplying to?

All wholesalers. The biggest wholesalers in the country, biggest wholesalers all over the country. February the 10th, when the cheque was due, he phoned me up at half past eight in the morning. 'Could morning Mendel, how are you?' I says to him, 'In the next 20 minutes I will be in to see you.' 'Oh, I'm only phoning you to see how you are.' So, I went in and I wrote out a cheque for about...in the region of about #15,000, which was due on that date, every penny. And #15,000 in '53 was very very big money. I mean this house we live in now, probably in those days you could have bought it for about seven, eight hundred pounds.

Yes.

So, well, my relation felt quite proud obviously. He has got a shareholding, 50 per cent of the shares in a business which he never expected. Whenever I took out, apart from my salary, he took out his share; I insisted on it I must say, I insisted on it. And then it went on all right, and then one day his daughter, who was married by then, the husband didn't make much, so he comes and he says to me...I said...what we did already in[??] the shares was, we formed a limited company, because it wasn't [INAUDIBLE] traded, and I changed my...and be unlimited[??], [INAUDIBLE] of mine, and he didn't like it, he wanted to keep his name going. Because it was a name established, I remember 1902, which meant nothing at all. I said no no, I said, people come in to ask for Mr Yugrosh[ph]. Mr Yugrosh[ph] has been dead for 50 years already. No no, a man well-known enough now, I prefer to go under my name.'

When had you changed your name, [INAUDIBLE] Beale?

Oh I changed my name soon after we got...in fact soon as we started business. Because my name was Bialavsky[ph]. It was very difficult when I started in a bigger way. People came in, and by coincidence I dealt 90 per cent with non-Jewish firms, they said Byalonsky, Biolonsky, and at the end, how do you pronounce it and how do you spell it? I felt well, it's no good. And funnily enough I felt, I've got to change the name; I wanted it with a B, and I looked at the pound note, and the Chief Secretary of the Bank of England, I've still got it at home somewhere, his name was Beale. It was S Beale or something like this. So, I thought well that's all right, that will do, it's good for the Chief Cashier of the Bank of England, it's good for me. And that is a fact, and that's how I changed the name, how I come to find the name Beale, that's the only way, the only reason how I found that name, by coincidence.

So you did that when you got naturalised?

No, actually I was still under Bialavsky[ph]. No, it's when I started business, when it became too difficult. I spent half the time pronouncing and spelling it. I didn't want, I didn't want to change really, I didn't want to, I would have preferred to keep my name, but it was always impossible for an Englishman to pronounce it and then to spell it, just couldn't do it. Most of them said Byolowsky[ph] you see, it's just nowhere near, it didn't sound anything near. So, I changed it. Well we didn't like the change, but I said, we're doing it and that's it. I felt already, well I realised that the benefit from my rich relation in having him as a partner, I can forget about it. It's the other way around yes. But again, people said to me, many many people, you must be mad, what do you want him for? Hasn't he got enough, what, you got to make him

rich? Some even said he has no right to. Oh, all sorts went down. So, but I felt no, I'm not going to offend that man; he still went out of his way, and he brought me here, he took an interest, I will not offend him, I didn't care. And his own children, he didn't treat them as well or better than I did, no. The greatest respect, until one day he said, because we made [INAUDIBLE] 25 per cent each, him and his wife 25 and me and my wife 25 per cent each of the shares. All right, that I didn't mind. And then, he asked me, I don't know, it was in the late Fifties, I should take in his son-in-law; for his 25 per cent of his share, he wants to give his son-in-law and I should take him in as a partner. So immediately I said definitely not, and it was the only time where I can say I have upset him. He comes down, he says, 'My share, I want to give my share to my child, and you say no?' Because what I have done, what I realised already then, I've got to safeguard myself, although it was 25 per cent each but I was the chairman, and I had the casting vote. I told him I was the chairman, I had the casting vote, so I can please myself, that I am in charge, if necessary, and this time I use my casting vote, and I said no. 'How can you say no, how can you possibly refuse?' I said to him, 'All right, now remember, I'm doing this', the reason, I says to him, I told him, the number of people who told me, what do I want you for, what benefit are you to me? In fact, if anybody came into his warehouse they say, oh, I've got 10,000 yards of material for shirts, he would phone me through - I was only across the road - and he says, well so-and-so is coming in with this, and if I like it I should put a penny on for him, a penny a yard for him. In those days you know an eighth of a penny a yard was big profit. Put in a penny a yard for him. And because of that I never bought a single yard, because it was against my principle. 'Here you are a partner, you're doing nothing at all, you contribute not a single thing. You're taking out a very very nice salary by the end of every year, absolutely for nothing. And here you want to make a lousy penny on a yard?' So, I just didn't want to say anything, I just said no, I'm not interested, and that's it.

And you say you were across the road to him. Where were you?

Well I was in George Street which is off Princess Street, 36 Princess Street, almost across the road.

What did you have there, what was it?

Well it was one big room, it was an office and then a big room with a cutting table, a few machines, ground floor. It was useful, it was in the middle of the city, people came in, we had a different office and so on. But, only the beginning. After the...I could have been anywhere, it wouldn't make any difference. So I said to him, 'Look, people told me simply to get rid of you, and I said no no, and people laugh at me for keeping you, for giving you a salary, giving you a dividend.' And I said, 'You know very well I don't...you are not contributing not even what is worth one single penny in a whole year to the business.' 'Well, if you ask me I will do.' I said, 'Yes, but the fact is, I don't ask you because I know, there is nothing you can do, nothing you will do. But...I am not interested.' I says to him, 'I give you my word, for as long as you live, and we carry on the business, you will remain a partner, only for one reason, you are in the main a partner, in the name of my parents, because you sent them ten shillings a week for Rosh Hashonah, ten shillings a week for Pesach, and a sack of old clothes once a year. To us it meant as much as the big factory I've got now. And for that

reason I will never say no to you. But to your son-in-law I must say no.' I must say one thing, when I heard[??], he says, 'Well, if you put it that way, forget it.' Oh yes, yes. I mean he was one of the most respectable people in the community, but when it came to business, very charitable, very charitable; many many people were set up in business, but for some reason... But I found out after, because my wife's grandmother was his auntie, right, because his mother and the grandmother were sisters, and they told me, strangers yes, family he never did a single thing. That was...everybody has got a mishidass[ph], and that was his mishidass[ph]. But as I say, I must emphasise again and again, apart from this he was one of the most respectable people, a man I felt very very proud to quote in that he brought me over, he is my relation, very proud, and I didn't have to say any more. I says oh, Fabian Friedland[ph], good enough. And that's it, and then we carry on, and do very very well.

Were you always in that business then, at 2...

Yes, yes.

Oh right. Did it change at all, I mean what you were making, did that change?

Yes we changed, we introduced later jeans, casual wear, so on. But it's...what was it, in the early Eighties I felt, enough is enough. It wasn't a viable proposition any more, competition and one thing and another, we called it a day and that was it, yes. And I think that's the end of the business part.

Oh right. So I mean, how long was he a partner, when did he die?

Oh, he died...about 1966, '67, something like this. In the Sixties he died. Now, the interesting thing there is, just to conclude, before I say that's the end of the business, just to prove my point what I said here about him was absolutely right. When he died, his oldest son Sidney[ph], he was at that time working in the [INAUDIBLE] Bank in, you wouldn't remember, there was a bank here called [INAUDIBLE] Bank in Quay Street...no Peter Street I mean, Peter Street. And when he got up from the shivah, the first phone call he made is to me. He says he wants to see me right away in his office in the bank. I say well...I must say I fully expected that he left me something in the will. Yes, maybe he remembered me at the end, feeling, well he hasn't done much for me, maybe he has done something. Though I didn't need it, I didn't need anything from anyone at that time, nothing from anyone whatsoever. So, I come in to him, and he said to me now look, he says, he himself is aware of how fair I was to his father, how much his father got out of me, and how little was put into it. He says, 'My mother is not a poor widow, and the 50 per cent of the shares...' he said the 25 per cent of his father's shares are automatically going over to his mother. He says, 'My mother is not a poor widow, I can have all her shares, they're mine as from...' that day. He says, there is no reason why...there is no reason, and I am under no obligation to keep his mother, she doesn't need it. And I've done my share for his father. Well, I must say I was taken aback; I didn't know...I felt very moved by it. I said to him, 'Sidney, I appreciate, not the fact that you've given me 50 per cent of the shares in the business', which was worth quite a sum of money then, I said, 'but I appreciate your gesture, that you appreciate what I have done for your father, and no one in the world would have treated it in the way how I did'. He says, that's exactly why he is doing it,

he knows that. 'But, I don't want the shares for nothing, we will come to an arrangement and I want to buy them back', which I did, for quite a fair sum of money, I bought it back. And then of course we lived in a flat until '54.

Were you living in the same...

Same [INAUDIBLE], yes. But from the attic we moved downstairs, it was luxury already, yes. From 17s.6d. or 12s.6d. a week, we moved downstairs for 22s.6d. a week, yes.

And you had, what, you had Stephen[ph] while you were still living there?

Still, yes, yes. Simon was born there as well, yes.

And when was Simon born?

Simon was born...Stephen was born in '51, '54, yes. And Tanya was born in '58. '54, '58, or '57, '57 I think. No, '58 that's right, yes. But by 1954 I bought a house already in Bishops Road for three and a half thousand pounds, which was a lot of money in those days. It was a very beautiful house, with a very small mortgage, which two years, within two years after that I had no mortgage any more. So, that's how I achieved my home, and that's how I achieved the business.

And that was in Bishops Road. And how long were you there for?

Oh I was there till 1973. No, we didn't move till 1955, because my wife's mother died in '54 and she was very superstitious, she didn't want to move to a new home within the 12 months. So I paid rent, I had a house from '54, but we didn't move until July '55. But the time we moved, everything was new, brand new, decorated, new carpets, because we had nothing. I will never never forget. The first day we moved there, after the carpets were in, the furniture were in, I was sitting in the front room, in the lounge, a beautiful room, and I just burst out crying automatically. I don't know why. But, well naturally, after I realised, I mean here is, from a little village living in one room, and a beautiful home like this, and nobody to show it to, and that was it, that was it. Still, we were very happy there, did very well. Tanya was born there.

How did you choose the names of your children?

Well Stephen is named after my father, whose name was ...Stephen[??] was Pilchas[ph]. And my grandfather, my mother's father, Eliaisa[h], that's his Hebrew name.

How did you come across the English names?

Just picked any name really, with an S, because I wanted them with an S, because my father was Selig[ph], yes, so an S. Simon is named after my wife's mother and her grandfather, his Hebrew name was...what was the name? Sadi [INAUDIBLE] I think, so his name is Chaim[??], Chaim Leip[ph], that was after... The equivalent name to whatever the name was. And Tanya was named after my mother. And that's it.

Can you tell me a little bit about sort of like your social life, who you mixed with within the community, who you had become friendly with, you know, sort of, in the early days.

I would say in looking back, I feel every bit as proud, if not prouder, and happy as well, about how I got myself involved in the community, what I contributed. Because, you know, money, when you make more, you make less, it comes, it goes, you spend it, it's gone; but I'm a great believer, I'm from the old school, where they say, shemtov[ph] is the biggest asset in life, which is a good name, it's the biggest asset, that nobody in the world can take it away from you. If it's the other way around, this is also the same; if you have a bad name, this also sticks with you. But fortunately I don't think I would have a bad name in the community.

How did you start to get involved? What was the first thing [INAUDIBLE]?

Well to start with, I was always, from the very very beginning, I felt that we as survivors must stick together. And in the early Fifties, myself in Manchester and Ben Helfcot[ph] in London, we established a photographic society, and that's how it started. In fact at a meeting only on Sunday, a committee meeting of our society, one of the members turned around and he said, pointed out, if they would only listened to me 25, 30 years ago, I suggested then we should buy a large home in Broughton Park, just to keep it for our old age when we get older and we can come together there, have a joke in Yiddish, a story in Yiddish. And of course I was the only one who...maybe another one who had a child, otherwise no one was married. And I said, when we are married, we have children, they may use it. And he said, only last Sunday, at a meeting at Louise Eliot's[ph] house, if they would only take notice of me. But still, they were all young, I was already settled, I mean I don't take it as a...they were wrong and... Of course I looked ahead already and they were all kids. They were more interested to go to the reason[??], who can they pick up today, who could they pick up tomorrow, it's as simple as that, and have a good time.

Yes. When did you first get to know them, I mean when you came to Manchester...

Oh as soon as I came here, yes, I went into the hostel, to [INAUDIBLE] Street, and then the Springfield Club in Smedley Lane, which was the Laski house, Nathan Laski's house, Smedley Lane, and they gave us their house for a club, which we...well the house was called Springfield, so we called it Springfield Club. In fact half of our lads, their wives, their present wives, they met the girls when they came in to pick up the boys there.

Yes.

It's a fact. Half of them got married that way. Louise Eliot[ph] and...Herbert[??] used to live there, he was a refugee. A few used to live in there, he met Louise[??] there. Sam Gardener[ph] met...in those days he was Sam Goldberg[ph], met Hanna there. A lot of them they met the girls, and they had young boys who went there, in the club, had a good time and all right.

So would you go there as a club?

Yes, yes.

It wasn't [INAUDIBLE]?

Yes. I went, in fact Marie[ph] came with me on the odd occasion. She was never keen on it I must say, but she came with me. Came because I wanted to go, so she came.

What would you do there?

Oh we had...it was a club. We had table tennis, we had...I didn't play but we had our own football team. Yes, we had our football team. I think little Jack Eisenberg[ph], little Yuncu, he was the...well he was on the team as well I know, I think Myer[ph] [INAUDIBLE] was the goalkeeper, yes, oh yes.

Did they have dances there?

Yes, yes yes. Oh it was a club, a very well-run club. [INAUDIBLE], the optician, he was in charge of the club. Yes, he ran the club. And, so I'm very very pleased that I ran that. If I wouldn't have started that and the society, I mean what we do now wouldn't have taken place. Our Second Generation club, probably nobody would have done. I mean we do now, which I'm going from her to [INAUDIBLE], we had just donated the ner tamid, the memorial light. Because there is nine Jewish boys from Greater Manchester got killed in the Israeli wars, and on the 5th of March - you should come with Mike[??], it will be very very interesting - at 3 o'clock the new ambassador, the Israeli Ambassador to London, it will be his first visit to Manchester, and so, he will come, he will unveil this here. And we donated that, the memorial light over it, which cost us quite a few hundred pounds. In fact it's Roman Hulta[ph], our friend, who designed the gates of the Yad Vashen[ph], he did it for us. So, it was a very nice thing. I was there yesterday, spent most of the day there getting it fixed. [INAUDIBLE] Hamburger[ph] was on the phone to me this morning about one of the things there, and how many people do we want on the top table. So I says to him, well look, if I say two, just myself and our chairman, because I am, they made me honorary vice president for life, because of what I have done, so when I'm finished as the chairman and David Summers[ph] took over, so they made me vice president. So I said look, nobody will object if it's just me and the chairman, Jack Eisenberg[ph]. If we get two many they will say, well why, what does he do there? So I said no, so he says fine, that's good enough. It should be interesting, at least for the first time he will be in Manchesterday, the ambassador.

I'll have to remember that. When did you say that you founded the society in Manchester, what year was that?

In the early Fifties.

The early Fifties.

The first reunion in London, which was the first Sunday in May, I remember it was in Leicester Square in a hall going down somewhere, but it was in Leicester Square, was in 1955, that was the first reunion. By then we were established already, we were a power, a body, where we organised the reunion, and since then every year we have the reunions, a reunion to celebrate the anniversary of our liberation.

Yes. What kind of activities in those early days did...what kind of form did it take, you know, the society?

Not much, not much. But we always met...we became sort of like a family. I mean nobody makes any simcha[ph] in the family, where everyone is invited, whatever name[?]. I mean, I made three weddings, two Bar Mitzvahs, and everyone, nobody was left out from the list, even when we had a wedding in London. This is automatic, it's accepted already, that everybody is invited. It's become like a family, and this is what it is, it's our family and that's it. And the most interesting, and the good part of it is that now, with the Second Generation the children, they will take over and they will meet with one another, they will belong to somebody, they belong to somebody. Of course it's through that I was involved in getting on the executive of the communal council. Whether it was my cup of tea or not, I don't know, but I was there, I contributed my share.

What, you mean as a representative of the society?

Yes. I was involved after in organising every year the memorial service. In fact I was the first...

When did that start?

It didn't start till about the Sixties, early Sixties. Yes, it started. First it started as the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial, which was always April the 23rd I think that's when it was...which was always in April. And then it became like, Warsaw Ghetto and for the 6 million martyrs, and I was always involved in planning it. For instance in the beginning, before I got involved they always brought in the Polish Legion with the standards came in, and the first thing I made sure I got rid of, and poor Joe Klein[ph] and [INAUDIBLE] about it, yes, he was a true, very very genuine [INAUDIBLE] member.

Oh yes, I have interviewed him actually.

Yes. And he wouldn't have it. I had a terrible row with him, but I got my way. I said, if they come with the flags there, I said none of us will come. I said no, I'm not having people who gave us away when we were queueing up for bread, and they would say, 'Here, Jude, Jude, Jude' and so on, and now they will come and moan our martyrs. Nothing doing, and I got rid of them. And, various things, I think I did my contribution to it. And then of course where my biggest achievement I feel where I really feel proud of it, is, eventually what I got involved and what I did for.....

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The thing which I feel most proud is, I had the opportunity, and again it's just one of these things, it just happened, I can't think how it happened; obviously I was interested. I was always a Zionist, always, and always, any Zionist activities I was always involved to take part in it. I was a Zionist from a very young age, I was before the war in the young polizian[ph]. And so, I always felt that the...especially since the establishment of the State, somehow I felt I wanted to be involved, and I really feel, there I feel very very happy, proud, that I had a chance of doing my contribution. I always did, my financial contribution was always there. But it's not everything; sometimes it's very easy to take out a thousand pounds and give, than to give your time. But I would say I gave as much time over a number of years to work for Israel as I did for my business. And especially in 1972, when our chairman, which I was on the executive of the Jewish National Fund, and our chairman, Albert Werner[ph] died suddenly, and the president and the whole executive from London came to the funeral, and he wasn't even buried yet and they came to me to my office in town, and they said to me, 'Mendel, you are taking over the chairman'. I looked at them and said, 'You must be mad. Me, a foreigner, what do I know? No, no. No. I will carry on working but I don't want to be the chairman, no no no.' So, they won't have an answer no for no[?]. I said, 'Why just me?' And they said quite simple, because I know what it's all about, and very few know what it's all about. And the JNF is not like the JEA[?]; if you are a big contributor and you know enough people you can approach and get money from them, it doesn't matter, you don't have to be a Zionist. But the Jewish National Front is different, you've got to know the history of it. Because after all, it was founded in 1901 as the first fund-raising organisation where the first [INAUDIBLE] purchased for the very first pioneers, for the first settlers, was from the blu puska[ph]. Yes, and that's how it started, and you've got to know the history of it. I must say I think I know it, I know it well enough.

Yes.

And this went on...

So this is the national JNF.

Well the one for Greater Manchester, yes.

Oh right.

The Greater Manchester. They came, [INAUDIBLE], and Dr Levi[ph] and all the big chiefs, they call came. And I was fighting against it, against it, against it, until...I said, look, there's a vice chairman, somebody named Mark Ruben[ph], why not him? Never, never. I said no no, I cannot. Of course this Mark Ruben[ph], he dearly wanted it. It was a big honour, a very big honour. He dearly wanted it, and he said to me one day he said, 'Well, what about if we have joint[?] chairman?' I said it's not OK, joint chairman. Anything to create a new chairman and they carry on. I wasn't interested. There's one thing, I never asked for any...for medals or anything, no. I always avoided to make headlines and having my photograph in the local rag, never wanted it. So, I knew very well, he felt well, he is the great Mark Ruben[ph], and I'm

just a foreigner, who will bother coming to me and ask me... Anyway, we called a general meeting, and it was... [INAUDIBLE] was packed, and this [INAUDIBLE], one fellow who was...I made him after the vice president, life vice president of the JNF for his contribution. He said to me, over his dead body will Mark Ruben[ph] be the chairman! I said look, as far as I am concerned, I'm going with an open mind to a general meeting, and I will accept whatever is passed. Anyway the general meeting passed, and then I came home. In a way I was...to say I was...I wasn't pleased, I wasn't proud, of course I was, I will be telling lies if I wouldn't say not. And I remember I came home with a smile on my face, and my wife says to me, 'Well, I bet you are the chairman aren't you?' I says to her, 'I am. I didn't want it, but what could I do? It was insisted'. If it was me, they would have had Mark[ph]. No, he is the vice chairman! And, carried on, and I had the most memorable times, memorable days, memorable events through it. I went to Israel, I went to the head office there to the seth not[ph]in King George V, in the building there, where the Jewish Agency is, like my second home. I met royalty, entertained by the President of the State, by the Prime Minister, everybody. And at the end of course they planted a [INAUDIBLE] in my name, come to think[??] something which I never dreamt of. I mean I did a lot of hard work, a lot. I remember one day I said to the doctor, Isaac Levi[ph], who he was the director of the Jewish [INAUDIBLE] in Ireland, I says to him, no, I says, I've got to make a living as well. He says yes, you have to find an hour or two for a living, I do agree with that! A great man, great man. In fact when...do you remember when I was with you, last year in July, and the fellow with the beard[??], he saw me, he put his hand round me and kissed me.

Yes, yes.

That's him.

Oh yes.

Yes, put his hand round me and kissed me.

Yes, yes.

Yes, he came to me, [INAUDIBLE], and with the executive from London, came to the funeral[??] and [INAUDIBLE], 'It's you'.

How long were you the chairman?

Ten years. '72 to '82, yes. And the most memorable, memorable occasion was probably in 1973 or 4, when we celebrated the [INAUDIBLE] silver wedding, and we planned it [INAUDIBLE] in May. And I was invited with my wife, and sitting[??] in the Guildhall in London. It was a beautiful dinner, beautiful function, sitting the next table to Prince Philip. And a wonderful occasion. I was twice there, through [INAUDIBLE], but that was really...the corner of...have you been to the Guildhall?

I have yes, but a while ago.

And it is the most fantastic building probably anywhere in the world. I don't think there is another building like it in the world, wonderful. And in the corner on the balconies during the dinner there was the band from the Queen's Guards playing the most beautiful, beautiful traditional Chasidic music, very nice, very nice. And through that we met...we've been with royalty, with the Countess Mountbatten, with...what is it, it is the Countess Mountbatten, yes. You know, when they assassinated Lord Mountbatten, we [INAUDIBLE] there, was with her, and there were only 16 of us in the party and we were invited to go. Entertained[??] by the President, [INAUDIBLE] was the President then, by the Mayor of Jerusalem, received by Begin, he was the Prime Minister then. It was very nice, very nice. Then when the...it's only about four or five years ago we dedicated this [INAUDIBLE] or whatever it is, the gallery for [INAUDIBLE]. In fact for some reason, the plaque they put up for me is the Queen's Forest[?]. Must mean that I am royalist! Which I am; yes, if you ask whether I am, the answer is yes, yes. I would rather have a monarchy than a president, any time, definitely.

What do you feel, I mean, is the importance of Israel for survivors, and you know, what do you think is the crux of it?

How do you mean?

The importance of Israel, how would you sort of classify the importance of Israel?

Oh, it's a simple question to answer. In fact so much so in how important it is, I hope that my children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren will never live with out a State. Otherwise, I feel very very sorry. Because I just...you see the war years, I wouldn't say that it made me like...like I don't trust people; I don't trust nations, politicians, nations I don't trust, no no, don't trust them at all. No, without a country, it's just not worth existing, because we would exist, that's all we would do, we wouldn't live, we would exist. It wouldn't be worth existing, no. I remember, I had one customer by the name Ob Acon[ph], he was the head buyer of Richard Loandes[??] in Birmingham, one of the greatest warehouses in the country. A great intellectual, not Jewish, a fine man. I got on with him, two brothers couldn't get on as well as him, and I've done with that man hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of business, just by word of mouth; I said, I've got something, this is for you. Right, I'll have it. That's the relationship I had with him. Great man. He knew the Bible, the Old Testament, backwards. One day he says to me,...no, he was a sort of a man where he came to see me every second Wednesday, and we always went for lunch in the Waldorf restaurant in Cooper[ph] Street, in the days when the ordinary lunch was 2s.6d. and a la carte was 3s.6d. But if I paid this week, in two weeks' time when he came, he insisted that he pays, that sort of a man. For Christmas I always bought him a bottle of whisky and a bottle of cherry brandy for his wife, and he would send me two silk ties or something like this. He said to me once he said, there's two questions he wants to ask, and most of his business, of his buying, he does is from Jewish manufacturers, but he didn't feel enough confidence to ask anyone that question as he has with me, but I must promise him I won't take it the wrong way. I says, 'No, I promise you, so what is it?' He says, two things. One, almost every one of the people he deals with, of the Jewish manufacturers he deals with, he knows that they vote Labour. The second question is, he said, he knows how proud I feel to live in this country, which I do, and

every one of us will have no regrets with this country at all. We came in here, they gave us every opportunity. I can honestly say I never felt a foreigner here, and I hardly was [INAUDIBLE]. All right, the odd time perhaps when they pulled the window down of the car, and once or twice I must say it happened, and I said to them, where are you going, why don't you watch[??] or something like this, which you do when you drive[??] all the time. And they said, 'Why don't you get back where you come...why don't you [INAUDIBLE] where you come from?' Well that's just nothing. But I never felt that I don't belong here, no. And I don't think there's many of us can say that. No, we had...every one of us said, the first taste of freedom that we experienced here, they welcomed us, right? We were treated like as an equal, which we never experienced. So we cannot say anything against the country, nobody would say. So, and I always told them how like [INAUDIBLE] which wasn't right, or somebody didn't do right, or whatever, so I complained. No Englishman could have complained more than I did really. So he said to me, one[??] is all right; can I answer him perhaps, what is the reason why rich Jews, comfortable Jews, vote Labour?

You've told me that story, you've told me the Labour story, I remember, but you hadn't said the Israel before.

He says to me, he knows how I am involved with Israel, how I go there regularly. Because in the early Fifties I started to go already there, and if I say until now I've been there say one and a half times a year, that's what it would average. So, and I feel so loyal to this country, how can I possibly split the loyalties? I said to him, all right, to answer you the first question about how is it that comfortable Jews vote Labour, simple, I says to him, just think of the Bible, right? Think of our Talmud. Isn't it based on socialism? It's all based on socialism, like equality, it's the most important, help thy neighbour. And by tradition I said to him, we've got to be socialist, we've got to help one another. I said, you cannot say the Conservatives help one another; the Conservatives are everyone for himself. The rich want to get richer, and that's it. So immediately he said, 'Mendel, you've answered me that. Now what about the next one?' So fine, I say, I myself treat England as being my wife, right? I am married, it's my country here, I live here, I make a living here, I bring a family up here, I'm happy to stay here; so, if you're happy with your wife you stay with your wife, right? And if not, well there's an alternative. You divorce your wife, or I could say well, I leave England. But no, I'm happy with my wife, I stay here. But Israel I would say, it is my mother. I said, it doesn't matter whether you live one end of the world and your mother in the other end, you will always go back to see your mother. Well, he was the happiest man in the world to hear the answer. And that's exactly how I feel, what I contributed to England, not financially which [INAUDIBLE] a small fortune, but I have no regrets, I wish I could have done more. But more than anything else is...how I connected[??], how much I worked for it, and I'm sure that with my children, because of how I was involved, they will always remain Zionist, always. All right, Tanya comes out more...comes out more with it than the boys, but I know, in my own heart I know they are very very much pro Israel, I know that. They're not as involved as much as Tanya is, as she always was, but they probaby... Let me put it this way, if I wouldn't be involved with it, they...Tanya perhaps she would, but the boys, I don't think they would be, they wouldn't be at all.

Did you ever at any stage think of going to live there?

Yes, yes, but if any regret I have, the moment about[??] my connection with Israel, is I would have been the happiest man if one of my three children will live there, yes. I would have been a very happy man. But, it's not to be, so, I've got good friends there, and in fact I spoke to one only Saturday night, I phoned her up. 'When are you coming?' I says to her...it's now well over a year since I've been the last, unfortunately I haven't been too well and so on, but I hope after Christmas to come I said, and because I feel homesick.

Yes.

It's a fact.

Now in connection with what you were saying about England, have you ever come across any anti-Semitism or anything here?

Not really, nothing which is...where one can point out, not really, no, no. I mean fair is fair, I mean you could find faults with anything, with any man, any woman, any nation, any...no, no. No, I...if I had to go anywhere at all outside Israel I'm glad I finished up in England. Or, put it this way, as a Jew, from my experience, and I've travelled a bit, to live outside Israel I don't think you will find a country where you can live as a Jew in a fairer place than in England.

Besides sort of your contacts through business, did you have any sort of social or other contact with non-Jews, outside of that?

No, no, no. I had one bad experience with a non-Jew that was in say the early Sixties. There was a firm, a manufacturer by the name Drinkwater in Stockport, who probably made for me six, seven thousand shirts a week, and the whole factory worked for me only. The man had a heart attack, he had to give up, and he said to me, do I want to buy him out? I said yes, within reason and so on, yes. And he says, all right, he will arrange for his accountant and his solicitor to meet me in my house which we lived at that time, Bishops Road. And I said fine, let him come, and I had my accountant with me. And we had a drink, a chat. The solicitor didn't say anything, the accountant did all the talking, and he said, 'Well go on Mr Beale. You're a reasonable man, Mr Drinkwater speaks very highly of you, you're very fair with him, very honest and very decent with him. How much is the business worth to you?' I said to him, 'No. You came here to speak on your client's behalf, so I take it that you are prepared to say how much you want for it. He didn't want to come, fair enough, I'm quite prepared to speak to you, but the business is yours, you're speaking on behalf of your client, you must tell me what you want for it. I won't tell you how much it's worth to me.' In fact I said to him, I never gave it a thought until now, which was true, I haven't got a clue. Because I didn't expect that at the first meeting we are going to finalise the deal, so what I want really here is, I just want to listen to you, see what you've got to say. 'Oh come, you're a reasonable man...' This goes on and on and on already for an hour, for two hours. I said, 'Look, I can see we're getting nowhere. You really want me to come out to tell you.' All right, so I told him, I forget the figure. Because after all it was no good [INAUDIBLE] it, [INAUDIBLE] only made for me. As you know, good [INAUDIBLE] is no good will[??]. 'The plant, I don't know how much you

know about machinery. Any decent machines what your client has got, I bought it, I put it in, because I wanted a better job, because he wouldn't spend any money on machines so I bought the machines, they're mine.' I said I bought them, and I loaned it to him. So, the plant is worth next to nothing. Good will, there isn't anything. For me it is worth as much as...I take it over today [INAUDIBLE] I get production. And I told him what it would be worth to me, what I am prepared to pay for it. He turned around to me and said, 'Mr Beale, I am surprised at you, that you come out with a low figure like this.' He says, 'All I can say, that you must be a greedy man if you come out with this.' Well, my accountant was there, who is Jewish. I turned around to him, I says to him - I remember his name was Hand[ph]. 'Mr Hand[ph], why don't you say what you intend to say, that I'm a greedy Jew?' I didn't care; by that time I just didn't care. I said, 'Say what you really want to say, I'm a greedy Jew. Mr Hand[ph], goodbye. I don't want to speak to you. If your client is interested to make the deal with me, I will have to speak to him, and the meeting is finished.' And I sent him out. Following morning this Mr Drinkwater phones me up and he says, what happened? I says to him, 'Ask Mr Hand[ph].' He didn't phone Mr Hand[ph], he phoned his solicitor. The solicitor told him. He came back to me this Drinkwater and apologised. He says the solicitor told him that language was used by Mr Hand[ph] which was not necessary. So I says to him, 'Mr Drinkwater, do you still want to make the deal with me, because I'm quite happy to stay as I am. I'm not...I'm not interested in your business, but you're a sick man, you've got to retire, OK, I will buy it from you. But the figure what I have told you, you know how much I told Mr Hand[ph]', he said yes, I says, 'and that's all that I am prepared to pay'. And that's exactly what I paid for it, never paid him any more. That's the only incident. But I had agreed...looking back now, I'm glad that I have told him. I said, 'Why don't you say I'm a greedy Jew, and get out.' But I must say, I have never...since then I have thought to myself, in business I dine with them, I wine with them, I deal with them, I talk to them, and I have had excellent relationships, excellent relationships with them. No question. I was always honest with them, always very fair, and I was lucky that the people I dealt with were all responsible, nice, true Englishmen, oh yes, yes. And I had a very very wide range of clientele, very, right across the country, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, everywhere.

But your contact mainly was mainly was it, sort of on a business level?

On a business...only business.

Only business.

Yes, only business. Otherwise I said, no; business, but at home, socially, no.

Oh, why was that? Why did you...?

Well this fellow[??], which was in the early stage, in the Sixties, which I was still earning my way, my years[??] of business, gave me a very very bad experience. But, looking back it is possible that when it came to private life, again this...how much I like the people, I like the country, there is a matter of trust through this bad experience I should imagine got into it, got involved; yes, I wouldn't be surprised that

had a lot to do with it, the trust you see. In business, fine, this is so much, you don't like it, you don't buy it, but at home, no.

How much did you mix socially with English Jews?

Oh a lot, a lot, oh yes. There was hardly a function, a social function in the city by any organisation, anything, where we didn't go. In fact I said many times to my wife, our dealings with [INAUDIBLE]. Oh very much, very much involved, and I must say I was never...I was always treated with great respect.

But in terms of sort of like personal friends, did you have as many English Jewish friends as 'the boys'?

Oh yes, yes yes.

There was no distinction or...?

Not really, not really, no, no. No, I had it...you know, looking back I had a very very nice social life with English Jews. They always showed me the greatest respect, always. It's the first few years which was very very bad, I was very heartbroken, very disappointed. They just didn't understand us, they just couldn't understand us. And questions which, all right, [INAUDIBLE] all right, we would say, oh yes, we know what you went through, but you know we had the Blitz and we had rations and this and that. But many of us were asked, 'What was the weather like in Auschwitz?' 'Did we go to school in the camps?' So naive, so... It took, for British Jews, I would say it took British Jews far far longer for them to sink in of what happened, the meaning of the Holocaust, how it happened, what happened, than any other Jewish community in the world.

And would you say you got over that barrier, you know, that the [INAUDIBLE] they didn't understand, to actually become friendly with them, how long did that take?

I think it probably for me...again, they appreciated me more when I got involved with the community, with the communal work I have done and got involved, more than... And like I say, oh, for the fact that I was a survivor, and now I am cultivating this through the Jewish community, not at all, no. No, that never came in, no.

So it was mainly through your communal work that you became...?

Yes, yes. But within the communal work I was treated not like a...oh look at this foreigner, look what he...who do you think he is? No, I never came across that, always with great respect. Again you know, it's an old Yiddische[ph] saying, 'YIDDISH.', which it means, the way how you greet someone, that's how you will be respected. Something of that nature. I was always fair with others; I was never the type to throw my weight around or... I must say, I mean you hear...I must give credit to my wife. Many many times she would have given anything not to go to a certain function or whatever; either she wasn't too well, or she was always with headaches, this and that, but very very seldom, I can't remember many times, maybe the odd times, but not many times that she let me down, which obviously, you sit at the top

table wherever, on your own it's not the same, it's not the same. Again, I felt great...in 1961 I believe, no, '66, yes...1966 which was our 21st anniversary, I was still the chairman then of our society, so the London crowd phoned me up and said well, we come every year to London, it's only fair we should do it here. So we did it, we organised it, and they came, one or two coaches from London, and it was the most fantastic, fantastic function. It was in the Steel[??] Hall, and this Oscar Joseph[ph] our president, he only died in the last year, Joan Steeble[ph], you know she was a great person, great woman this Joan Steeble[ph], she was a Quaker, not Jewish, she was a Quaker, and she dedicated her life to Jewish refugees. Fantastic person. And, we organised it, and it was the most, probably one of the most...best.....

End of F2922 Side B

F2923 Side A

Was it mainly [INAUDIBLE]?

There were several, but I left, there is only one, [INAUDIBLE] Sampson, you've got it on the list you will find, only one, yes, which is still in Manchester.

What happened to the others?

They emigrated, they left. Israel and...even in London there is only I think two or three in London. For some reason they just...where the transport came from it was more boys were about than girls, it's the only reason for it. But overall I think more...you see they picked men more for work than women, so that's the reason why, on a pro rata basis, I mean out of a hundred thousand they would pick more men for work than they picked women, so unfortunately women they had less chance because they felt oh, only a woman, can't be bothered with them, and that's it. Like the Greek Jews, there isn't a single woman survived, not a single one. Of course there's a lot of things which, looking back I feel happy that I managed to do it, to have a chance helping various people in Israel, friends of mine, materially and financially and in many ways. One particular, one friend, she lives in Haifa. Unfortunately through the war experience...[COUGHING] Unfortunately through the war experience she couldn't have a family; she became pregnant again, again, again, and at the end they told her, sorry, you will never have a family. Then...well, the husband was not the type for her and she wasn't the type for him, that sort of a marriage, which again it happened so often where two survivors, same thing in common, that's it. So myself I always felt, I would rather marry somebody with not the same in common; yes, I always felt that way, and I don't regret it I must say, I think it's better. Otherwise you eat sleep and drink with the experience all the time. So, one day I come there to Israel, it must be the late Sixties already, and she said to me, she applied for a charity to...no, to adopt a child, but they came, she lived I remember now near the port, very very poor conditions, in the old part near the port where the Arabs lived. And they said they cannot give her a child where she lives. So, I says to her look, find a place, I'll see what I can do for you. Anyway, to cut a story very short, she found a place, through me she got a flat in Mount Carmel, she got a child by the name of Runit[ph], a little girl, lovely little girl. That child was two years in the Navy, she's married now, and I heard that she is expecting her first child, and they're a happy family. That's one of the things, one, but come many many like this. I remember the same friend, there's another case. I think I was always destined to...somehow to take other people's problems over, so they follow me, if you know what I mean, they follow me. One day we had this same, that particular friend who lived near the port, a neighbour of hers, a woman, a Hungarian woman - no Rumanian, Rumanian woman. She survived the camp, but her son managed to get away in Rumania and alien[??] papers. That's back in the Sixties, beginning...and that was the time when they were allowed out, Rumanian Jews to emigrate to Israel. And she couldn't get her son out. So one day this friend of mine says to me well, my neighbour wants to speak to you. So all right, she comes in. Poor woman, crying. Her son she knows, she was in contact with him, he found her through the Red Cross or whatever that his mother is alive. Her son is married, had a child, and he cannot get an exit permit from Rumania, but she found out there's somebody in London by the name Jacobi, the fellow is probably[??] not

alive any more. He lives in Park Lane, London, and he can get people out from Rumania. So, I said to her well, I will make enquiries, and I came home, the following day I took a train to London, and go in there, number 55 Park Lane, pressed the bell. Beautiful young woman comes out. 'Can I help you?' I says to her, 'Can I speak to Mr Jacobi?' 'Oh, is it about Rumania?' I says to her, 'Yes.' Well, 'Go home, go back to Manchester, write all the details and you will hear from him.' All right, did it. One day I get a call from him. Right, send him \$2,000 to a bank account in Switzerland, this and this bank, this and this number, and in six weeks he will be out. So all right, I sent his note to this friend of mine, I says to her right, will you tell your neighbour, and the same goes for you, I don't want to be involved any more with it, that's it. I mentioned after to this Joan Steeble[ph] when I met her, she says...I told her about it. 'Oh yes' she says, 'we know; we work with him as well!' Just to get Jews out from Rumania. This is where the Central British Fund is doing a lot, but I don't...now probably not any more, but I'm going back 30 years ago, they brought out hundreds of Jews from the Arab countries, and they paid official smugglers and they brought them out. And she says oh yes, we work with him, I know him! I could go on, if I can remember the incidents like these, over and over again. No, what I'm pleased is, all right... Also I'm very very proud of my family, they are respectable children, and I expect in time they will...something will rub off from me on them I hope - only the good part will rub off.

Do you feel that, you know, your sort of experience with the war had any effect on how you brought your children up?

Yes.

In what way do you think?

You don't take children for granted, like an English couple. Well, married, the child is born. It's got a different meaning, it's a family, it's not just a child. Each child is a family. That's why we definitely put more into our children. I wouldn't expect so much from them, no we don't, we don't, no. It's a different...you see each child is a family, it's not just another baby, another baby, all right, and you carry on and that's it, and you send the child to school, then they come home, and then with a bit of luck also university. It's more to it, it's alive. It works round the children, the family, there's no question about it. Because just they are another generation which, it's a big thing, it's a big thing. We don't expect... You see with the average person, all right, another generation, it's expected, it's normal. But that is not normal, that is more of an achievement than an expectation. But I think this is more probably... That's why I mean myself I never treated my children as my children, more like friends. I mean in turn with every one of the three of them I had some wonderful holidays with them, and individually, with every one of them.

Did you have any sort of ambition for them, or for the way you wanted them to grow up?

Yes. Yes, we certainly put more into it. Nothing is enough, nothing is enough. Expecting naturally, which parents don't expect, wouldn't like to see their children to

be the greatest? But it's...it's hard to explain, hard to explain now. We look at them not just as our children, it's our family, not our children. They represent so much.

Yes. What kind of schooling did they have? What kind of schools...?

Stephen went to a grammar school and he went to a college, he's got a degree, a business studies degree. Simon, Simon could have been probably more than Stephen and Tanya put together, but he went to Carmel College, yes, Simon, for five years, did his O-levels at Carmel College but he didn't want to continue. As much as he regrets it now.

Why did you send him to Carmel?

Because he wouldn't work. He was a very clever child, very bright. His headmaster, Mr [INAUDIBLE] says, 'Happy little son, grammar school material, Manchester Grammar School material.' But he wouldn't work, and he didn't get anywhere, so we sent him to King David; King David going back in those days wasn't much of a school. He himself came and said he wanted to go to...at that time it was near Brighton, what was it called...I forget now the name of the...another Jewish college, near Brighton. I said no, if you want to go away, then you go to Carmel College. And I went with him, saw Mr Stambler[ph] at that time was the headmaster, and he had to sit for an exam, but I would say I got him in; he didn't, I got him in. In fact I said to Mr Stambler[ph], I said, 'Mr Stambler[ph], in six months, if you feel that Simon is not material for your school then I want you to tell me, because I want to take him home, I don't want to waste my money and your time.' But I never had any regrets. He did quite well from there. I begged him to stay another...to do his A-levels, but no, he wouldn't, he wanted to come home. So all right, came home. Oh he regretted it many times, he said it, he should have done it, yes. But he had a fine education there, a fine grounding, and again I felt well, if he is going to go, then if he's going to go away to a boarding school then it's going to be the best, which, it was the best. It's the best now and it was the best then. I think it was a higher standard then than it is today. Of course today they will take anyone who is prepared to pay, but when Simon went, oh no, no no you had to pass the exam, almost as hard as Manchester Grammar, yes. He sat for his exam, and he didn't do well at all. And I said to Mr Stambler[ph], I said, 'Look, I know that's the reason why he didn't get into Manchester Grammar, he cannot sit.' He was that type, he goes to pieces if he has got to sit and concentrate. But give him a chance; give him six months, and after six months, if you say that you're wasting time with him, I expect you to come and tell me and I will take him home. But he was all right, I had no problems with him there, no.

What did he go into after his O-levels?

He went in for a hairdresser and he went into business, he went into all sorts. Anyway he finished up a hairdresser, and he's doing very nice. He's married, he's got two lovely children, he's all right. In fact he was here this weekend. Comes quite often, oh yes.

Where does he live now?

In London.

Oh he lives in London, I see, yes. What primary school did they go to?

Jewish Day School.

Jewish Day?

Oh yes, yes. No that, I made sure that they have a good grounding, yes. Now, let them do what they want. I told them, I says to them, you've got to have your grounding, you've got to have your education, because you never know when you will need it. Oh I'm quite happy that they went; Tanya didn't like it I must say, she didn't like it, she hated that school! She hated it! But at the same time it did her no harm, it did her no harm. No, I have no regret, I have no regrets. It was very orthodox, it's still orthodox now; I don't think they were quite as bad then as they are now.

That's right, it seems to have gone more so now doesn't it, yes.

They've gone more. But I knew about it, but I have no regrets, I wanted them to know. I felt what they won't learn from a very young age, they never will. And, I'm quite happy that they did. I feel quite proud of, they're very nice [INAUDIBLE], all of them.

You know, that just reminded me. I haven't asked you about sort of your religious development, how, you were telling me before after the war you completely sort of rejected religion because of your experiences. How did that...?

I finished up what I think, if I describe myself, a genuine traditional Jew, that's I would say how I would like to be known, as a good genuine traditional Jew.

Yes, yes. I mean did that come gradually, sort of this, you know, sort of coming back a little bit towards the tradition?

Yes.

Or was it [INAUDIBLE]?

I would say, it had a lot to do with the family, yes, bringing the family up, that is the way. Actually I wanted to make sure that they've got a good background so they should remain Jewish. I don't know, if one of them would have married out I...I cannot even think what could have happened, I don't know, I don't know. I am glad that I am lucky enough, and it's only a matter of luck, that it didn't happen to me, that's all that I can say.

Yes, yes. And what, did you have a connection with a shul, did you join a shul?

Oh yes, yes. Again, soon as the family came along, that's when I...when I got married I joined the [INAUDIBLE]. But once the family came along then I went to live in the

first house in Bishops Road, I joined the Prestwich [INAUDIBLE] congregation. But I was asked many many times to become involved in shul business, but that I said no, no. I must say that's one of the few times when I said no, I am not going to get involved. I will pay my share, and that's it. No. Here I felt like the old typical traditional Yiddische[ph] saying, [YIDDISH]. Now I know your husband is very much involved, yes? Well, good luck to him, somebody has got to do it. But at the same time, I have never...I always said, I will never criticise a shul executive. They're doing a job, it's the most thankless job. Somebody has got to do it. Because I know how it is; I mean when you go to shul, whether you go once a year, twice a year or 52 times a year, it's more to it than you just go, you sit in your seat and so on and that's it; it's a lot of work goes into it behind the scenes. If people are prepared to do it, they're not making a living out of it, it's a very thankless job, I have no right to criticise them. I never criticise an executive yet, I wouldn't.

What kind of level of observance did you sort of come to keep with the children?

To what?

What kind of level of observance did you come to keep? What kind of things did you feel that was important to sort of show them?

A kosher home, yes, because I believe this is part of tradition. Because after all, kosher, it is tradition. It comes under the dietary law and it is traditional, so I look at it. It's nothing to do with orthodoxy at all. I am traditional.

When you say traditional, what are you thinking of, what kind of things?

Friday night they know it is shabbat. I always took them to shul when they were young every Saturday morning; oh yes, made a point of it, always came with me. And Marie's[ph] grandmother lived in Beechwood Road, which was across [INAUDIBLE] round Heaton Park. When we lived in Bishops Road, invariably I took them round, from shul we went there, always see the great-grandmother, because that was traditional. There was another thing. I always took them round, before we went for Yom Kippur, I always took them around.

You've told me, yes.

Oh yes, always, I always made sure. This again, the respect for the older people. And they know, it sticks, it sticks. A little bit rubs off. I tried to...this is all part and parcel of showing them the right way, you see the Jewish way, the right way. What I didn't believe in, just everything has got to be just Jewish, Jewish, Jewish only; I was more concerned...all right, everybody is concerned that, doing the right way, as the Jewish way. I was interested[??] in two different things.

What about yom tov? Were there certain yom taven[ph] that you...?

Oh yes, yes, in fact I never worked, and many times I was desperate, and because of them, because of the children, not so much because of myself I must be quite honest about myself, just to show them an example, my business, my factory, my office was

never open on a shabbat[??], we never worked. Sunday, many times, most of the times, and Sunday I brought a lot of the staff in, paid them double, but never on a shabbat[??], never. That is just to show them. Now I am not prepared to criticise them in any way whatsoever what they do now, I wouldn't, no; they're grown up, they can do what they want. They know the right way, and they cannot say I haven't shown it to them [INAUDIBLE]. I always felt a relationship between myself and my children must be on a more...not on a parents and children relationship, but more of friends, than, I am your father, you are my child and you have got to do...and you've got to do what I say and so on. I am not...I don't believe in it, no, no, I don't believe in it. Now I am glad that I didn't...I always set myself out that way and it worked, it worked. Looking back they can say they had a very nice upbringing, and I was fortunate that from a very early stage I was probably one of the first amongst us who was already reasonably competent with the[??] very early stage. We had very nice holidays, no less than two holidays a year, that's going back 35 years ago, and people had one holiday a year then. Always nice holidays, well dressed, a nice home, never short of anything, no. From the day, well from when Stephen was maybe three or four years of age, I would say after, the three children were never short of anything.

How have they named their children, your grandchildren? Have they been named after any of the family?

Yes. Lee[ph], that's my oldest grandson, is named...he's got two names, one name is after my...Nicholas, is after my auntie Necher[ph], that's my father's sister. Jamie[ph] no. In London, Simon, Simon is the most unpredictable, I wouldn't like to say who he named the children after; could be after the dog, the cat, I don't know! He's very unpredictable, I don't know. Tanya, Daniel[??] was named after my two sisters, which, I've got my two sisters, I mean my parents, Stephen is named and then Tanya for my mother. Maybe when Tanya has another one, maybe I...there's one auntie, a very very favourite, that's my mother's sister, that good-looking one, the one, the actress. Tanya may object to it because she was an actress, I don't know!

Mind you Tanya's doing a bit of acting at the moment.

Well she always like it, yes, yes, yes.

Would you say that, I mean...has the Holocaust had an effect on your health?

It's so difficult to say, it's so difficult to say. It couldn't possibly have done us any good, that's for sure. We will never know. We're all getting a pension for loss of health from the Germans, which we had to state, we had to go through medicals and so on; they didn't just give us, they didn't give it so easy, we had to prove it. Mentally I would say a lot, yes, yes. Maybe not so much in the physical side, which is a miracle, it's a miracle it hasn't. I mean when you come to think, I mean every one of us we were like...it's like a big turkey[??], no more, when we were liberated, [INAUDIBLE]. But [INAUDIBLE] were nothing really, it was all...every one of us was around about...about 30 to 35 kilos, that's about the average.

And you think physically you recovered?

Physically we probably recovered, but mentally, as we get older we...I would say we are suffering more and more from it. Yes, as we get older and the body is getting weaker, and the body cannot cope with the pressure and with... You see the body cannot...the physical part the body cannot fight it any more. Because after all everybody gets weaker as they get older, the body physically gets weaker. Mentally we are [INAUDIBLE]. In fact when we had this meeting last year, this conference, you know when we divided into working groups.

Yes.

And it was amazing when we all started telling how our mental reaction is and what we, how we suffered, all mentally, it's unbelievable. I thought, I'm probably [INAUDIBLE] more than anybody else, but I realise I am not as bad as most. But everybody, very much the same effect, the same way.

What kind of things?

Well nightmares particularly, and immediately you put the... I mean there is hardly a night when, as soon as my head goes under. I don't think of it all day, and a certain scene comes to you, automatically. And everybody said the same. Immediately you put your head on the pillow, a certain time, a certain period, a certain scene, a certain event.

The same one, or different...?

Different.

Different all the time?

Different all the time, yes. And then you try, and then you try to fight it, and get it and say right, well I must...I've got to put it out of my mind. And this happens with everyone. Nobody can say that they don't suffer from it, impossible, impossible. And this [INAUDIBLE], this is the only thing what I am afraid, as we get older and weaker it will become more prominent with us.

Yes. Does it affect you during the day?

Not so much during the day, no, no, not so much during the day, no. No, when you're busy, when you're around it's not so bad. But once you relax, that's when it hits you. I'm sure medical people will have a good answer for it.

Or know, they would certainly know about it, yes. When you became naturalised, first of all when did you become naturalised, how early?

After five years; when I was here five, six years. I came '46, I think about 1952 or 3 I was naturalised.

And did you give the birth date that you had come over with?

Oh, that was...!

What happened with the birth date?

I didn't get a birth certificate, my original birth certificate from Poland. Funnily enough, where I lived in that Izbitza[ph], when I wrote away they still had it and they sent it to me. But I don't know whether this did much...I sent it as it was in Polish, whether this did much to it. When I filled it in with my friend Harry Myers[ph] the solicitor.....

End of F2923 Side A

They didn't accept the Jewish name. Do[??] I know what is wrong with this Jewish name? I said, can you see anything wrong with this name? After all, they were the most prominent family in Manchester, in a very very large, a very very big way in business. He said how do I know them? I says to them, I just know them, because I go there, I do business with them on a very large scale. I treat them well, they treat me well, we have a very good business relationship and that's all, which was true. Of course what I didn't know, I found out after when I told this person, that in 1933 when he was a young man, he belonged to the Communist Party, and he went to Russia as a delegate of the British Communist Party! Well they drove me crazy for about six months, another witness, another witness. Anyway, eventually my solicitor, this Harry Myers[ph] phones me up and he says to me, well, he's got like a draft back from the Home Office, just for us to check that everything is all right, all the details before they give me the naturalisation certificate, but it's all right. So, I go with him, we check it, and I said to him, yes, look, they've got born the 24th of the 12th 1921. I says, 'And what did you tell them?' He says, 'Nothing.' He says, I waited, if they will come and ask him, well then he will try and give an explanation.' He he says, 'I wasn't going to tell them. I waited if they ask me, they didn't ask, OK, fine!' Never asked, and that was it.

Have you ever been interested in politics, in politics here? You mentioned [INAUDIBLE].

Never interested in British politics, never, no. No, I was never...I always felt like British politics, I dare say I probably could have got involved, if I had wanted. What sort of a job I would make of it I don't know, but I probably could, but I was never interested. I always felt, I mind my own business, I live here, I am treated well, I will do my share for the country which gave me the freedom, which I think I did, and as far as politics, I will leave it to the British. Never interested, no. Working for Israel, yes, that was I think in my blood from a very young age, but otherwise, no, no.

How do you think you feel now towards your former captives and towards the Germans?

How I feel now. Not much different. In fact I would say if anything, as I get older more and more hate against them than even before. No, no, I don't know...I don't think so...there's no question of forgiving or forgetting, no question whatsoever, never will be. And even now, if I read anything, or if I hear on the television some of [INAUDIBLE] German, the word German, or Germany, or a German, it's always like a stab in the chest, automatically, automatically. I still, if I hear the language, it's like a torture. No, no different, no different, no. Automatically, if I see a German who is already round about 60, automatically the mind works back, now I wonder, was he by any chance here, was he by any chance there; where was he involved in the war? You just can't help it, cannot help it. I had an incident in April last year, when I was in Israel. Whenever I am in Israel I always go to the Wailing Wall, and to Yad va-Shem. I don't go inside, I just walk round the grounds, but inside I tried several times, I go so far and I've got to leave and I go out. But I walk round outside, and the most interesting [INAUDIBLE]; if you're there, next time, you walk round outside, most

interesting scenes, the statues, the different figures outside, with wordings. It's very very interesting. And last year I was there, just on my own standing, there is a statue of a Jew with his tefillin, with his tallit round, and very very moving statue, very moving figure. And a fellow comes in, and he's taking photos, one after another. I said to him, I says to him, 'Oh, I would love to have a photograph taken, looking up to this man, staring in this man's face.' 'Oh' he says, 'I will do it for you; give me the address, and in two weeks you will have it I promise you.' I says, 'Fine.' Then I got talking to him, I says, 'And where are you from?' and he says, 'From Germany.' Well. I says to him, 'What are you doing here?' He says, 'What do you mean, what I am doing here?' I said, 'I mean, what are you doing here, how do you come to be here?' 'Oh' he says, 'I work for an organisation doing research into the Holocaust in Germany.' Oh I says to him, you are? So I says to him, 'How does it move you here? How much do you believe in what you see around here, and what you don't?' Oh he says, from his research, he...it was very impressive in this particular moment, he says from his research he proved that the German people can not deny that concentration camps didn't exist; they knew about it.

Right, yes.

But what they didn't know, what is happening inside in the camp, this is what his research has proved. Can you see? It's proved that they were aware of the concentration camps, what they were not aware of, what happened inside. So I said to him, I said 'Look, now we are going to disagree. Now I can tell you who I am.' So his face dropped. I says to him, 'I was in a place called Gorkitz, do you know about it?' 'Oh yes, yes, I know where Gorkitz is. Now it's the Grenze, that's the border.' I said, that's right. And I showed him on the ground, like the street, I showed him, here were fields, here were blocks of apartments, and here was like a cul-de-sac, the gate into the camp. I says to him, in the summer when it was the daylight, when the SS marched us back, they all came out on their balconies from these buildings here, and threw all sorts of rubbish at us, pulled faces at us, made fun of us, all sorts of slogans they shouted down, and everything. I says to the man, the same people when the Russians came in, when we came out from the gates, when the Russian army, when they liberated us, the very same people came out, crying tears in their eyes. They were living there and never knew what is happening there, I said, and how can you make this out? I said, and I was there, don't tell me that this didn't happen; I have seen it, it happened to me. I've never seen the photograph!

I'm sure!

Never sent me the photograph!

Coming back to how you feel about Germans and Germany. I mean are you careful, do you buy anything that's made in Germany, or does that not bother you so much?

I don't go as far as that. Because I'm not a naive type of a person, no. I feel in this respect, first of all whether I buy anything from them or not it won't make them any poorer if I don't spend it, one pound or a hundred pounds a year on Germany, that's one thing. And then, we live in Europe now, I keep saying this to Tanya and she's very keen on us not getting anything in Germany, which I feel proud of her, yes.

Nothing wrong with it, I don't say she has anything wrong with her, no, I feel very proud of her. I don't go out of my way to get anything German; I mean I would never drive a German car if it would be given to me for nothing, I wouldn't want to be seen in a German car, that's out completely. I wouldn't go to Germany for a holiday, no way. But, at the same time I say, I said it many times, we feel...we live in a community now, part and parcel of the community, whether we like it or not, right? You've got a family, you've got good sisters, good brothers, you've got bad sisters and bad brothers, all right, we are family, we are a community, we've got bad sisters and brothers there, but we cannot throw them away. No, it's...you can drive yourself crazy, it drives you crazy. I mean look what happened after 1992. So, no, I went out of my way as it happens not to become that way, because I felt it can...it will hurt me more than them.

The other thing I wanted to ask you is about Poland, and of course I mean you went on a visit to Poland with Tanya.

Yes.

Was it last year?

No, it was July '87.

'87, right, yes. And you know, sort of how you felt about going back, and what that meant.

Mixed feeling, very mixed feeling. Depends where. When I went into the little village where I was brought up, sort of a satisfaction that I am here, somewhere which I spent my time there in poverty, hardship, anti-Semitism, and here I am with my child, going round with a camera, and...always, it was always... In fact, for years, especially since I got already on my feet a bit through the early Fifties, it was always in my mind, I always had a dream, that one day to go back with my children and my family still there, and take presents and show them how well we are dressed and how well we look and so on, and I have achieved it. For the fact nobody was there, but the dream was there. The Poles themselves, I didn't go out of my way to have anything to do with them, didn't bother with them; to see how they lived, how they are treated, how they are held back by the Communist regime, that gave me pleasure, I must say it gave me pleasure. Sort of a feeling, oh well, you got what you deserve. The place where I was absolutely heartbroken, and I felt if I don't get out quick enough I will probably break down, was Lodz. Yes. In fact, we were booked there for two nights, staying in the Grand Hotel. You say, what's the Grand Hotel? Before the war when I went past there, when I saw people going in, and the big lights there and everything, I felt like angels from Heaven come to stay in the Grand Hotel. So...but to see what...to know what sort of a city it was before the war, and I lived there [INAUDIBLE] the war, when I was there, and to see it now, and the type...well with hardly a Jew; the head of the Jewish community there, the so-called Jewish community, is a blind man of 80 years of age. It absolutely broke my heart, broke my heart. In fact after the first, we arrived there, late already, we went into the hotel and we went to the Jewish Committee then we went to the cemetery, because my sister was buried there; went round where the ghetto was, where I worked, where we lived, which I was glad to see

not standing any more where we lived, because it would probably break my heart to see some Poles within it. By the end of the second day, I said to Tanya I says to her, 'Well, Tanya, I have decided, we are going back to Warsaw'. And she turned around and she said, 'Dad, I'm glad. I cannot stay in this city.' Because I told her what it was and so on, and there is [INAUDIBLE] broken down, and see that a handful of old Jews in these committee rooms, in the [INAUDIBLE] committee rooms, in a delapidated building, no sign of Jewish Committee, they wouldn't dare put it up, they would probably tear it down, even now under the Communist regime. And every day a woman comes in and cooks a soup for them and they come in, they sit down at these long wooden tables, and they sit and they have their soup. In fact they insisted that the meal[??] for us, for the three of us, myself Tanya and the driver, a dinner. So all right, we came back. I nearly choked on it. But what was it? A potato soup, a big bowl of potato soup, and that was it, that was their dinner, that was their main meal. In Warsaw, the only time I broke down was in Warsaw with the shul. There's only one shul there in Warsaw, a small shul, beautifully done up by the American Jews. And the reason why it was there, the only one that's there, because 90 per cent of Warsaw was bombed, and so the Germans needed accommodation, so they used that shul which wasn't destroyed to keep their horses in. So after the war they renovated it and it's very nice. I don't know whether you've seen the photographs, Tanya's got them.

She's going to show me, yes.

Yes, show the photos. So, on the Saturday morning when we went there for the service, and I stood there like punch-drunk, to see there is the Warsaw, 400,000 Jews, and just look at it there. There was hardly anybody who could take the service properly. I mean you wouldn't hear...on the bimah it's Polish spoken, here they speak Polish, because they don't speak Jewish, so there's nobody to [INAUDIBLE] the Jewish. Everything is announced in Polish, everything is Polish. And then there was a group of [INAUDIBLE] children from America, or I think from a religious school they were, and they were on a tour there, and after the davening[ph] so they asked us to go for kiddush, so we went and crossed the yard, to a room on top there, nothing elaborate, and everybody got...they took a glass of whisky or vodka, a piece of cake, a piece of white bread, and a piece of gefiltre[ph] fish from Israel, from tins. We found out after that that was their dinner, and that a few of them they went round when there was...I couldn't eat it, and Tanya couldn't eat it, and they went round when it was still there so they grabbed it and put it in their pockets there. And then these youths[??] started to entertain, nice Hebrew songs, and that is when I really broke down, I thought to myself, well there you are, you are to bring children from America to entertain 400,000 Jews, which that is in fact what it was. It was very traumatic, but I'm glad I did it, and I'm grateful to Tanya that she agreed to come. It's a pity that the boys didn't come as well, it wasn't convenient for their work. Now Tanya says, it's their loss. Well I don't say, I say well maybe one day they will go, maybe they will. I mean if any of them wouldl say to me, to us, they want to go, whether I feel up to it or not, for their sake I would go, I still still go, yes.

How interested are they in that kind of thing, in your past?

Not interested, they are interested. But, Tanya won't have it, but I know for the two of them, for their own personal reasons, it was just not possible to go with them last time. I know it. I definitely wouldn't say that they don't want to go, not interested, far from it. Tanya won't have it. Well, that's for her to decide. But I would say given the chance they would go; they just couldn't do it, couldn't do it.

So you say you're pleased that you actually...that you did go back?

Yes, oh yes, yes, yes. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. Only, not from myself, to go back with my child. I felt it like sort of a revenge. Here I am back again, against all odds, and I'm back again. To me it was revenge.

The very last thing is, were you in fact the only survivor out of all your cousins and second cousins, and...?

Yes, yes.

Everybody that you had...

I had one distant cousin in Stockholm, we were very close with him, and unfortunately it's now...he was the exact same age as me, exactly 17 years ago, at the age of 50, he died of a heart attack in the underground in Stockholm, waiting to go to work.

And he survived the war?

He survived the war in Russia, yes, he was in the Russian army, the Polish Russian army he was a survivor.

Which branch of the family was he from?

He was from my father's side, yes. But he's the only one from my father's side, he was. The other, the Friedland family and so on here, is all from my mother's side. Otherwise I don't know how...and I don't think anybody could have looked further afield, or for longer and further, and [INAUDIBLE] as much to find anybody as I did. I am more than happy in my own mind that I have done everything I possibly could to look for any, but there is no one, no one at all.

When did you find out about this cousin in Stockholm?

I met him after the war. In fact, in Lodz he was fighting with[??] this [INAUDIBLE], the one who sent us that letter, [INAUDIBLE], the Goldman[??] run by the Polish army here, and he was fighting them in the forest, and I saw him, [INAUDIBLE], and I said, 'Nathan[??], what are you doing here?' 'Well', he says, 'I'm down [INAUDIBLE]... The world's greatest gentleman, a very nice boy, very nice. So, in fact he came over here for our Simon's Bar Mitzvah. Yes, came with his family to Simon's Bar Mitzvah. And there, I got him out from the army there, got him out, and he went off to Germany, to a transit camp, and he married that girl who, I helped her to adopt his child, her sister. Yes, he married her sister. Two boys, and the wife still

lives in Stockholm. And one boy, brilliant boy, brilliant, he got...he became a doctor from one of the highest schools, what is it called, the...oh, the very very famous medical university in Stockholm, the most famous in the world, I forget now the... And that's where he trained, and he died last year, the boy. Yes, he was only in his 30s.

Do you feel...I mean do you feel something like the Holocaust could ever happen again? Do you think it's something, it was a one-off, or do you think there is the potential for something else?

It's easier for me to say it shouldn't happen than to say it cannot happen. It's almost impossible to say it cannot happen. I am very very worried for America, for American Jews, very worried, very worried. Because their position is too high; if God forbid there's some crisis, some major political crisis, it can happen as easy as anything, I could see it happening, if there is a major political crisis. They will need a scapegoat, and they've got a readymade scapegoat, readymade. Not so much here funnily enough, no, not so much here, but for American Jews I am worried, yes. American Jews are not happy at all. Because they say a crisis cannot happen; it happened in Germany. It happened so many times before, but it can happen, it can happen. A world slump, you see. I mean, say a similar slump what happened in the 1920s in America, if this would happen now in America they've got a readymade scapegoat, yes. Now I feel very sorry for them, with all the wealth, with everything. No, if it does happen, I hope I won't be around. I wouldn't like to see it again. But if you ask me, the place where I've been most afraid, America. Probably somewhere which you never probably even thought of, but I can see it, I can see it.

Was there anything that you wanted to say to me, that...?

I scribbled out here a note. If you would ask me, how would I like to be remembered by my family, I would say, after having survived, which it is in my opinion a greater tragedy, I know [INAUDIBLE] Kraus[??] wouldn't agree with me, but to me a greater tragedy than the destruction of the [INAUDIBLE] temple, right? The greatest tragedy in our history where death was more normal than life; life was an irregularity and death was a normal thing. I would want to be remembered just...I wouldn't want my family should be sorry for me, look, my father, look what he went through. No, I would just want to be...would like to be remembered as another page in our history. That's plenty. Just another page, finished. It happened to me, it happened in my time all right. I'm here to tell the story, although I'm the only one, but, it's another page. Although I'm the only survivor of the whole, all my family and all my relations, I feel that, the way how I feel that the reason why I'm the only one who survived, that somehow that I am the living memorial and testament of them. That's how I...how I think it. It had to be, I am the testament of them. And, to my children, what I would like them to do is, when I am no longer here I am sure they will remember me, but in the same time when they remember me, they should remember them, and with that I will finish shalom.

Shalom.

End of F2923 side B

END OF INTERVIEW