

Transcript of the *Shoah* Interview with Mordechai (Michael) Podchlebnik

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Podchlebnik 1.

Question : - Ma'am, would you ask Mr. Podchlebnik his age?

Response : -70 years.

Podchlebnik 2.

..... -Starting over ...

Q : -Would you ask Mr. Podchlebnik his age?

R : -70 years old.

Q : -How does he seem so young?

R : -He is not responsible for it.

Q : -Does he know that he looks extraordinarily young?

R : -

Q : -He is very physically strong, isn't he?

R : -He was.

Q : -Not anymore?

R : -No, not anymore.

Q : -What did he say he was, a sportsman?

R : -He was athletic.

Q : -What did he say?

R : -He said that he played football before coming here, and in Frankfurt, Germany, he played football.

Q : -What was he doing in Frankfurt, in Germany?

- Response : -He was doing what all Jews did before the war, he did a bit of business; it was a little...a little sour.
- Question : -Did he stay a long time in Germany after the war?
- R : -He stayed from 1945 and in 1948 he arrived here.
- Q : -And as for coming to Israel, it was in 48? Is he still working?
- R : -He is still working, in a linen room.
- Q : -Owned by whom?
- R : -He has a partner; he doesn't work much.
- Q : All the same, could he begin to tell us what happened, that's to say...why we are here?
- R : -He is going to try to tell us ; it began in 1939, his parents dealt with cattle, and the Germans returned in 1939 and began to take certain Jews and send them to an unknown place.
- Q : -What city is he from?
- R : -Kowo ...
- Q : -Can he describe where Kowo is?
- R :
- Q : -Cut, he's not going.

Podchlebnik 3.

Question : -Is Kowo a Jewish city?

Response : There were 3,000, a little more than 3,000 Jews.

Q : -.....

Podchlebnik 4.

Q : -Was Kowo a Jewish city?

R : -There were more Jews than non-Jews.

Q : -So there was a majority of Jews?

R : -It was about about all the city.

Q : -There were how many inhabitants?

R : -Between 5,500 and 6,000 inhabitants.

Q : -And was it a very old Jewish community, had the Jews been in Kowo a long time?

R : -A very old Jewish city, 8 to 900 years at least.

Q : -And he was born in Kowo?

R : -Yes.

Q : -And his parents?

R : -His parents were born there.

Q : -And what did Kowo have as far as Jewish institutions? Was there a synagogue?

- Response : -There was a synagogue, there was a smaller synagogue, there were study rooms ;
- Question : -What did the Jews do easily, what was the occupation of Jews? The profession of Jews?
- R : -There were shopkeepers, tailors, cobblers, artisans ...
- Q : -Were there rural Jews as well?
- R : -In general, no ; there were perhaps two who had a little land outside the city.
- Q : -And what were the relations with the Polish like?
- R : -They were very good ... they were good, there were perhaps one or two anti-Semites but in general relations were very good.
- Q : -And himself, what did he do, what was his profession?
- R : -He traded in animals between Kowo and Lodz, sold animals to Lodz.
- Q : -Which animals?
- R : -Live animals, cows ...
- Q : -That's to say, he was a cattle merchant?
- R : -He did not exactly sell cattle, they were cheaper in Kowo and he sold them to Lodz with the advantage.
- Q : -In Lodz, he went to Lodz, there are how many kilometers between Kowo and Lodz?

Response : -80 kilometers.

Question : -And what was his family life, was he married, did he have kids?

R : -He was married, he married in 1933, he had a wife and two children.

Box 37 : Podchlebnik 5.

Q : -What was the personal life of Mr. Podchlebnik, was he married, did he have children?

R : -He had a wife and two children.

Q : -And, in 39, when the Germans entered Kowo, how old was he?

R : -He can't recall, between 28 and 30, 30 rather.

Q : -OK, and Kowo was, from what I know, since the Germans called it [illegible] and it was a territory that they had annexed to Germany, it wasn't under the general government of Poland?

R : -Yes, that lasted a little less than 14 days, two weeks, the Germans arrived, they were already in the city and had taken everything.

Q : -Ok, can he tell us... aside from ...what happened in Kowo, when the Germans arrived, did they install a ghetto in Kowo?

R : -When the Germans entered, the first thing they did around the second day, was to burn the synagogue, they had thrown grenades and they burned the synagogue. After they promulgated a decree, that all the

- Response : men must be counted and leave their homes to present themselves for work ; then the men who left for work were beaten a little with blows from sticks and those who hid and were found were killed. There were two men who were killed, an elderly man and a young man, he remembers the names.
- Question : -Did he present himself or did he hide?
- R : -He presented himself and he was with everyone at work where he more or less repaired the bridges that were bombarded, they threw rocks in the water and they were beaten and many people died. That lasted about a few months, they went to work, and they didn't really make a ghetto but they expelled the Poles from certain streets and they put the Jews in their place. And after about 6 months, they took half of the population and they sent them to Loubetski.
- Q : -To Loubetski
- R : -And they stayed. In 1941, the end of 41, they recounted the Jewish population and sent them to Bouga ; but [Mr. Podchlebnik] stayed because before the war he had a Polish friend who had a restaurant and he worked in this restaurant, and his friend told him to stay and he stayed.
- Q : -What was he thinking, at this time, the occupation, was he thinking that the situation was going to worsen, did he think the Germans wanted to liquidate all Jews, did he have hope, what was he thinking? How did he live like that?
- R : -At first, he really thought that it was a matter of transferring the population, he helped his father and mother climb into a train because he they were on a

- Response : list and it required they be on this train, but he didn't want to take it because he was not on the list.
- Question : -That's to say that he thought it was simply a transfer of the population, he believed what the Germans said. Ask him.
- R : -Yes, he says that he really believed it was a transfer, the inhabitants of Kowo were the first to be transferred
- Q : -OK, returning to what he was saying, they assembled the whole population of Kowo and they deported them to Bouga ; there are how many kilometers between Kowo and Bouga?
- R : -He says that he did it twice, as he said before, there were between 17 and 18 kilometers.
- Q : -Between Bouga and Kowo?
- R : -Between Bouga and Kowo.
- Q : -But I heard him pronounce the word [Cacchno], what did he say?
- R : -He said a part was sent to Chelmno, to Chelmno there was a very big farmer.
- Q : -A very big ?
- R : -Farmer ;

Podchlebnik 6.

Box 38.

Question : -Ok, so if I understand correctly, at the end of 1941, the Nazis assembled everyone who remained of the Jewish population of Kowo and they deported them 18 kilometers from there to a village called Bouga ; what happened for him then?

Response : -Then the Germans took effectively everyone to Bouga, they expelled the Poles from Bouga, the Poles were obliged to leave their bedding, their potatoes, and the Jews took their place, but [Mr. Podchlebnik] stayed in Kowo because he worked for a man who had authorization to keep him there for work.

Q : -Did he stay in Kowo officially, with permission, or did he stay covertly?

R : Yes, he stayed there with official permission. He could not to stay a long time, because he was Jewish, so he went himself, by his own means, to rejoin his wife and children in Bouga.

Q : -How's that, he could not stay a long time because he was Jewish? He said a little while ago he stayed with permission, was it he who didn't want to stay a long time, or did someone tell him to leave?

R : -A German got permission so that he could work.

Q : -Which German ? I don't understand ...

R : -A friend that he had known before the war, who was German, who become his employer.

Q : -What one calls a *volksdeutscher*. A V.D. who lived in Kowo before the war?

Question : -Ok, then he did not stay in Kowo of his own will or of his boss's will, or was he expelled from Kowo?

Response : -He was the only Jew remaining in Kowo, so his boss did not want to stay and he rejoined his family.

Q : -He did not want to stay in Kowo because he was the only Jew in Kowo, is that correct?

R : -

Q : -How long did he stay in Kowo as the only Jew?

R : -Perhaps three or four days, not more.

Q : -And it was unbearable for him?

R : -It wasn't hard, properly speaking, but he was alone, he had no one with whom to talk.

Q : -Il couldn't talk with the Poles?

R : -He didn't know...he had nothing in common with them.

Q : -And was he suffering from being separated from his wife and his children?

Podchlebnik 7.

Q : -He suffered from staying alone in Kowo and being separated from his wife and children?

R : -He suffered but he was not able to stay, so he asked his employer to take him and he crossed a bridge with his employer that he did not have the right to cross and he arrived by foot at the home of his wife and children.

Question : -And he was in Bouga by foot?

Response : -By foot to Bouga ;

Q : -And what was the situation that he found in Bouga, after arriving?

R : -There was no ghetto, but the people did not have the right to move from the city of Bouga.

Q : -There were no one other than Jews?

R : -No one but Jews ; the Polish population was displaced and the Jews were put in their small homes.

Q : -And was it only Jews from Kowo or were there Jews from other cities, other villages?

R : -Still from another city, 3 kilometers from Bouga, Basik, there were a dozen Jews from Basik.

Q : -OK ; what happened in Bouga, what were the Jews thinking was going to happen to them in Bouga, were there Germans in Bouga?

R : -In the corner of the village, there were three German gendarmes.

Q : -And what did they think, what did the Jews think?

R : -They didn't think anything, they stayed there around a year, they got up in the morning, they went to work at the railroad station, one found work for them, cutting wood, transporting rocks, and at night they returned.

Q : -Is he sure what he said, they rested

Question : -a year in Bouga?

Response : -He remembers it very well, it lasted a year, the same for taking us in ; that lasted a year, it was very good, since after a year there remained around 25 people until we were caught and deported to [Chelmno].

Q : -There remained 25 people, meaning what? Where were the others?

R : -The other had already been taken to Chelmno, and when we arrived at Chelmno they put us in a cellar serving as a prison and in this cellar he saw clothes, things that belonged to other people, and he already understood that something had happened.

Q : -I would like to start over, he's recounting well ...

Continuation of reel #359 : box 39 : Podchlebnik 8.

Q : -Is ... Is Bouga, is it far from Chelmno?

R : -About 25 kilometers.

Q : -Then, can he recall precisely what happened the day when they were taken from Bouga and sent to Chelmno, when did that happen, at what time, how many men and how were they chosen?

R : -What day, he cannot remember, but he remembers that it was the end of 41, two days before the New Year ;

Q : -I asked how many men?

R : -Around 25, those who could work ;

- Question : -Strong men
- Response : -There weren't many there anymore, those who stayed were those who were strong.
- Q : -And when they left Bouga, were there still Jews in Bouga or had all the Jews already left from Bouga?
- R : -Some women stayed, children, the elderly, not more.
- Q : -And were his wife and children still in Bouga when he left Bouga?
- R : -Yes, they were still in Bouga.
- Q : -Good, very well ; they were taken from Bouga ; how did you make the trip between Bouga and Chelmno?
- R : -They made them leave night and morning they put them in a truck, the 25, in the truck ; there were five gendarmes who guarded them and they left ; behind them, there was a jeep with a weapon pointed at the truck. And if there hadn't been this jeep, perhaps he could have jumped, others could have jumped, but there was the jeep and the weapon, so we couldn't do anything.
- Q : -When he arrived in Chelmno, did he recognize the village, he lived in Kowo and Kowo was quite near Chelmno, had he already been to Chelmno before the war, for example?
- R : -Yes, he did business with Chelmno, he knew each meter and the entire surrounding region.
- Q : -What happened when he arrived in Chelmno,

- Question : describing it precisely.
- Response : -They arrived in front of a door that was then opened, they entered into a courtyard, they descended, there were two rows of gendarmes who counted them, all 25, there wasn't another face ; that lasted a day, two days, until after the New Year, that's the 1st of 1942 ...
- Q : -January ...
- R : -January of 42 ... And every day they were given a little coffee, a little sugar and a piece of bread.
- Q : -Did they stay in this cellar?
- R : -
- Q : -What was there? From what I know, it was a castle.
- R : Yes, it was in the courtyard of a castle ...
- Q : -In the cellars ...
- R : -In the cellars, when, a few days after the New Year, one morning, they heard a truck arrive with [illegible]. And people descended; then from among them were taken [illegible] 5 men who had arrived, who they made part [illegible] by taking 20 to work in the woods, he stayed among the 5 who stayed in the cellar and he did not know why.
- Q : -What was in this cellar there they were?
- R : -There was nothing.

- Question : -And on the walls, there was nothing?
- Response : -On the ground, there was straw where they slept. On the walls, there were marks, from here no one leaves alive, he thought that it was the people from the little villages around Chelmno, who had arrived before him. There were many names.
- Q : -There were inscriptions on the walls?
- R : -There were inscriptions.
- Q : -Then did he understand at that moment that something terrible had happened there?
- R : -Not only did he understand, but when he arrived in the courtyard, he already knew that it was terrible, he already understood.
- Q : -Why, how did he understand?
- R : -Because when they got out of the truck in the courtyard he saw clothing, shoes, dispersed in the courtyard, he saw that there was no one besides themselves, and he knew that his parents had passed through there, and no Jew remained.
- Q : -Did he know that his parents had already been transported?
- R : -
- Q : -He heard rumors before ;
- R : -There were rumors, the Polish said that the Jews were being killed, but to believe that, no one believed it.
- Q : -But he had heard?

R : -

Box 40 ; Podchlebnik 9.

Question : -Ok, there were rumors circulating that Jews were being killed, did he know about these rumors?

Response : -Yes ; and no one believed that anyone could do such a thing.

Q : -Did he believe it?

R : -No ;

Q : -Then, let's return to the castle ; he is in the cellars of the castle, and then 20 men are selected from those who arrived with him to be sent in the forest, he stayed in the cellars with 4 other men, and he saw ... he heard a car arrive, a truck arrive with Jews inside, then can he tell us what he witnessed then?

R : -The people exited the truck and entered the castle's first floor where there was a bathroom, the men, women, children, they were told this. It wasn't a bathroom, but the Germans deceived the people and told them that they must go to the bathroom ; they made them undress, the women, their children, the men together, they made them cross this room and exit to the other side, where they were put ... where they got into trucks ; he heard the trucks turning and the people crying, and people reciting the "[*Shema Israel*]" , and the cries became weaker and weaker ; then there was total silence, he left with his 4 companions from the cellar, they died,

- Response : and they assembled the clothes that remained in front of this supposed bathroom.
- Question : -He heard the Jews ?
- R : -Yes, he heard them cry, he heard them pray. The Germans were on the side, and pushed them, and beat them with weapons to make them enter the truck more quickly.
- Q : -Did he understand how they died, at that moment?
- R : -Yes, he understood, because the rumors talked about it and when he exited he saw the trucks closed, and he already understood.
- Q : -He understood that the trucks were gassing the people in the trucks ?
- R : -Yes, because he heard all the cries and he heard how these cries became weaker, and then the trucks were sent near the woods.
- Q : -And what were the trucks like?
- R : -The trucks resembled the trucks that deliver cigarettes, in that they were closed, but behind there were double doors.
- Q : -What color?
- R : -It was the color of the Germans, a color [green[like that ... after the Liberation, there was a truck like that which was still there in that place.
- Q : -Does he remember ... what did he say about the marks on these trucks?

Response : -They weren't inscribed ; they sorted the belongings, they folded the belongings, and one time when they were folding, they were made to go back down to the cellar and then quickly, every day there were more trucks like that arriving and there were around 80, 100 people per day.

Question : -And he never saw them, he never saw the living Jews who entered in these trucks?

R : -No, he never saw them, until he was folding the things and he returned to the cellar. And already, the first day, of those who went to work in the woods, that night only 17, 16 returned, because there were 3 or 4 who couldn't, or did not want to work, so the Germans told them to lie down in the soil and killed them.

Q : -Did the others, those who returned at night, did they tell what happened in the woods?

R : -Yes, of course they told us, they told us how they dug graves and, the morning, he [did not want] to stay in the cellar, he wanted to leave with the others.

Q : -And, in what state were they, these men who returned from the woods, at night?

R : -The men were tired, but they had had coffee.

Box 41 : Podchlebnik 10.

Q : -Ask him if the men who returned from the forest, in the cellar of the castle, if when they returned that night, if they were in a state of very, very grave shock, what did they say?

- Response : -He said that when the people who returned from the forest were telling us about it, they didn't tell us about it, they had an exhausted air and when he went after to work, he said then [Kaddish?], and after a few days of his work in the forest, he saw his wife who was dead and in this convoy there was a man, who was a butcher, who was still slightly alive, so a Ukrainian killed him.
- Question : -Then I would like for him to tell us how it was for him when he was in the forest for the first time? Tell us that as if
- R : -He said that when he left for the first time, he left in a truck where there were about 10 workers, the truck was followed by a [illegible] where there were other workers ; in the truck there were gendarmes who guarded them and when they arrived in the forest he already saw the trucks with the gassed people inside.
- Q : -Ask him if he wanted to tell this story of now?
- R : -I can't even, but if it is necessary, I can tell it.
- Q : -I believe it is necessary that you tell us with a little more detail, I can't ask him two or three questions to make him talkAnyway, how was this forest, was it hot, was it cold, where there graves, were there not graves, what was he told when he arrived, what did he have to go if he had
- R : -So he said upon arrival, they were put in the graves, 4 per each grave that was already ready, and

- Response : this man who found himself in a grave and when the Germans threw the bodies outside the trucks then they took off the jewels, then they pulled out their teeth, then they threw the bodies in the graves, these graves were in the shape of a crater and they had to, they, dispose of the bodies like herrings, head *tête bêche*.
- Question : -And who opened the doors of the trucks, who unloaded the bodies, was it the Germans or was it them?
- R : -The people from [], from our place.
- Q : -So, the Jews?
- R : -No, the gendarmes did not understand the jewels, and when they could not remove a ring, they cut off the finger.
- Q : -The gendarmes, meaning what? It was the gendarmes, the Germans?
- R : -It was the Ukrainians,, with black uniforms.
- Q : -So what happened the first time he unloaded the corpses, when he opened the doors of his first truck, the first truck that he saw?
- R : -What could he do, he cried ; the third day he saw his wife and his children.
- Q : -Without surprise?
- R : -He put down his wife in the grave and he asked to be killed ; the Germans told him that he still had energy to work and would not kill him now.

- Question : -Was it very cold?
- Response : -Yes, it was cold, it was winter, the beginning of January.
- Q : -And how did you dig the graves, the soil must have been completely frozen?
- R : -the ground was frozen on the surface, inside it wasn't.
- Q : -And, they were taken back to the cellars for the night?
- R : -At night they were brought back in the cellar, but those who no longer had strength to drag, they were laid in the graves and killed.
- Q : -So they killed them regularly?
- R : -Yes, then those who didn't have the strength and in general no one came back, except those who had themselves succeeded in ...
- Q : -Were they fed?
- R : -They were given bread, they gathered together, they sat down in a circle, and were given bread, they warmed up a little coffee, the SS watched during this time.
- Q : -At this time, they didn't burn the cadavers, they simply buried them.
- R : -No, they buried them and each row was covered with soil, they weren't burned yet. There were around 4 or 5 levels and the graves were in the shape of a crater.

Box 42 : Podchlebnik 11.

Question : -Tell him that I saw, in a written report by a German forester, a German who worked in the woods in the region of Chelmno, exactly, who told that he had lived besides young Jews who worked in unloading the trucks and dug graves, and being so cold that to warm up he entered the gas trucks and warmed up with the cadavers ?

Response : -He says that that did not happen to him, and that it wasn't cold in the graves and at lunch time they lit a fire of undergrowth and they warmed up.

Q : -How many men were working?

R : -He says that there were 20, there were also three or four men who went down, then three or four new men, there were perhaps 10 who worked at the bottom and there were 20.

Q : -And of those who drove the gas trucks, the Germans?

R : -Yes.

Q : -How many were there?

R : -He says that there were perhaps [], he knows.

Q : -How many were in the trucks ?

R : -He says that there were two drivers, and that behind them there were other people.

Q : -Did the Germans themselves participate in unloading?

- Response : -No, they didn't go near it ; he said that one time when they were taking people to put in the gas trucks, un [] remarked that one of the people had a diamond and gold so he leaped in the truck to take them but the doors were closed and he was gassed with the others. He said that perhaps the Germans weren't aware that he was in the truck, and that the people inside it did not let him leave but he died with them.
- Question : -The Poles told me that one day between the castle de [] and the forest, the back doors of a gas truck opened and all the bodies fell out and they remained on the road, and among them there were still people who weren't dead, since the journey wasn't completed. Did that happen during his time, or later?
- R : -He says that first of all he's never heard that and he says that it's not true. He says that first of all, the doors could not be opened, they were closed from the inside, and that finally the people did not die in the forest, that the people died when exiting the castle.
- Q : -So that was in the second period where they died in the forestHe gave himself how many days of survival? How many days of survival did he give himself?
- R : -He said that he did not count the days of survival, because from the fourth day he was with a friend. They had already devised an escape, they thought they could climb into a window of one of the trucks and that they would jump out among the civilians ..
- Q : -The truck that they ...
- R : - ... that took them to work. As they agreed to escape, the 10th day, they were separated, his friend

Response : -was taken in a train and himself in a truck, but they agreed to escape and he decided that he would escape.

Question : - ... what is this train, a bus ...

R : -Yes, excuse me. Therefore the 10th day, he got into a truck and they were all sitting

Q : -Going to work ?

R : -Going to work. And they were all seated and the SS pointed their weapons, they were dressed in fur, and at a given moment he got up and asked if he could have a cigarette and one of the SS gave him a cigarette and a light, at this moment...

Q : -

R : - ...he had ... yes, then he wasn't smoking, then he asked the other people who were going with him to work to get up and also ask for cigarettes and during this time he took out his knife, he cut the tarp and he thought that he had to jump, even if he must die, he had to jump.

Q : -How was it that he had a knife?

R : -There were knives, they ate with knives.

Box 43 ; Podchlebnik 12.

R : -
-At the moment when he jumped, it was near the edge of the woods and he succeeded in entering the woods and visibly the Germans did not manage to get their bearings, he ran and he heard firing. He forgot to day that when he jumped, his hat fell off, and it was too cold,

Response : -it was snowing, then ... he knew when he jumped, he knew more or less where he was, he did not want to return to the side of the city but the opposite side, so he crossed the road and he entered the woods and there he saw from afar, more or less 50 meters, a Ukrainian who called him and who was clearly looking for someone else, then he understood that his friend had also jumped. So when he saw the Ukrainian, the Ukrainian also visibly saw him and he was at the moment on narrow path, when he abandoned this path, he turned left, he turned right, then he turned to the left again, but he was scared that the Ukrainian was following him and leaving tracks, at least following his tracks, so he crossed the road again, exited the woods, crossed the road again, and he turned, he ran, and then he did not see him anymore.

Question : -Were there woods, on the other side of the road, the road was in the middle of the woods?

R : -Yes, he says there was nothing but woods ; when he crossed the road, he continued to run a little on the road, then he disappeared in the woods that were in front of him. And he ran. In the woods he got lost and he ran a long time and he found his way again to the entrance and not far from the castle. So then when he saw the castle, he located himself, he returned, he ran until he saw a sort of barn with straw, he tore of a board, he entered the barn and he hid himself in the straw. And when he was in this barn there were laborers who worked in the fields, who cut the grass for the animals, who spoke Polish with one another, and they said that the Germans were searching for two escapees, and they did not know that he was inside, and he stayed two days in the barn. The second day, at night, pushed by hunger, he left the farm and he arrived in a village, he knocked on the first door and said to a villager that he was hungry and thirsty, and the

- Response : -villager gave him bread, sugar and told him to go in peace, but quickly, because there was a search for two men. Then, when the villager fed him, he did not want to say that he knew the region, he asked for the path to Kowo, but he knew the region very well and he knew where he was perfectly well, he went by foot until Grabuch He went to Grabuch and there were still some Jews and there he met ... he did not meet, he went to the house of his wife's side of the family and he told them what happened, what he saw, but no one wanted to believe him.
- Q : -The Jews in Grabuch hadn't been deported yet?
- R : -No ; he says no because as it was a very small village, and that it was necessary to take detours through the woods, it was a very long path and when there was nothing close to the road, the Germans didn't let out their dogs.
- Q : -And Grabuch, it was a little town, completely Jewish?
- R : -No, Grabuch included only about 60 ... about 60 families, he knew everyone, he knew with them
- Q : -Did he know the rabbi in Grabuch?
- R : -The rabbi, no, he did not know him.
- Q : -There is a letter written the rabbi of Grabuch at this time, a letter that he sent to his friends in Lodz, which explained that they knew now what was happening at Chelmno, and that they know thanks to a man who had escaped from Chelmno.
- R : -The people of Grabuch did not believe, they did not believe that his

Response : -friend escaped, but when he arrived, everyone knew him, knew him as the athletic one, then as a merchant, so then the people believed ...

Question : -Because his friend passed through Grabuch also?

R : -He met him in Grabuch, and he hugged him and when he hugged him he had a hemorrhage.

Q : -Who had a hemorrhage?

Box 44 ; Podchlebnik 13.

R : So he met his friend and they hugged, and he was bleeding from the nose, and they stayed together a few hours, he tried to convince his friend to leave because it seemed very dangerous but his friend refused because he had friends, of how own family, so at night he went to a bakery, he asked for a little bread, and he bought it, and the next morning he set off, he left.

Q : -But how does he explain why his nose was bleeding?

R : -He doesn't know ; it was the nose that was bleeding, perhaps the joy, perhaps emotion, he doesn't know ...

Q : -Visibly, that made a strong impression on them since he left

R : -Yes, of course, he never dreamed of finding his friend and finding him alive.

Q : -What did he tell the Jews in Grabuch?

R : -He told exactly how it happened, he even

Response : told them what happened to his wife, and the people knew his wife, it was his wife's family.

Question : -And how did they react, did they believe you ... ?

R : -What did you want them to know, what did you want them to say, the people of Grabuch, it was already a ghetto ; and all the people that he met in the ghetto, he knew them before the war and of course, everyone knew him. He wasn't a poor man before the war.

Q : -But why is he saying

R : -.....

Q : -Ok, ok, ok but it is clear that the rabbi alluded in the letter that he sent which I mentioned earlier.

R : -He isn't sure, perhaps it was his friend who told them before, his friend was from there, he doesn't know, can't remember.

Q : -His friend was from Grabuch, he called it?

R : -Yes.

Q : -What became of this friend, did he die or ...

R : -He doesn't know, he proposed that he leave, but he didn't want to and he hasn't seen him since then.

Q : -But was he the only escapee from [Chelmno?]?

R : -When he left, he was the only one with his friend, and from what he knows, there weren't others.

- Question : -And why weren't there other escape attempts after yours?
- Response : -When he ran away with his friend, after, the people who remained were chained, they were chained at the feet.
- Q : -So it's that, they were chained by the feet, at the knees, and there was no longer the question of escaping (inaudible)
- R : -He says that following his escape they men who worked were chained.
- Q : -All that, that happened very early, at the beginning of the period of the extermination of the Jews in Poland?
- R : -In 1942.
- Q : -At the beginning of 1942, in January 1942.
- R : -After the first of January ; New Year's Day they were still in the cellar, it was after New Year's Day that that began. They were in the cellar again for 10 days and the 11th day, he left.
- Q : -He must have survived for three years of chasing [illegible].
- R : -Then he arrived in [illegible].
- Q : -Yes, he knew no one there, so he went to the Jewish Council and asked to speak to the most senior member and he told him all that he had seen, all that happened to him, and the councilmember told him that if he did not stop telling his story, he would call the Gestapo.
- R : -Why, according to him?

Response : -He absolutely wanted the Jews to know what was happening, but the councilmember did not want him to tell them, so he told the councilmember that of all the places that he had passed there were other council members who had gotten used to killing and that that helped nothing, that he asked for nothing, he was not asking for a *zloty*, that he had not asked for money, without money he would be more like the people who had money and he left and he had gone nearly 20 meters and the councilmember sent a Jewish policeman to bring him back. Then he returned to where the councilmember was and the councilmember assisted a witness and asked him again to tell everything he had told earlier, so he began again and

Box 45 ; Podchlebnik 14.

Response : -So he returned to the councilmember and he retold the whole story and the councilmember listened to him and wanted to give him two or three thousand *zlotys*, but he refused it saying that he no longer needed money, that anywhere he would go in Poland he spoke Polish, he would find villagers who would feed him, who just wanted to know what was happening from leaving there ...

Question : -Did the councilmember believe him?

R : -He believed him because he said he didn't want any money and above all he told him that he had not come to ask for help, that he just wanted to inform, and that in any case he would no longer be there the morning after, he would leave.

Q : -I don't understand

R : -The councilmember believed him

Q : -The fact that he was not asking for money was the guarantee of the authenticity of the story he told?

- Response : -Yes, he believed him, because, about these financial affairs , he understood that he did not want to take any money, he was disinterested, he wanted to inform them, and above all he told him that he was not a little boy and that he was from a good family, that he always had money, and it wasn't what he had come to ask for, he came to inform them.
- Question : -Yes, but even if he had taken the money, wouldn't that have been true just the same?
- R : -Yes, he says that he told them that he did not need money, that it was the news, he wanted them to know it, that wouldn't have changed even for a half-million *zlotys*, that he did not come to ask for help, that he came to tell them the truth.
- Q : -Yes, and before him, the people of this city had not heard
- R : -No, they knew nothing about it ;
- Q : - [illegible]
- R : -He knew that they were going from city to city further and further away. He said that in a little while he had met his brother-in-law, his sister and his nephew and that his sister had procured a permission to travel for him, for her husband, for her son and for herself, that his nephew was very attached to him, more so than to his own father, so he decided to take the train with his nephew and they took the train destined for a city and when they arrived there the Germans recognized the Jews and among the Jews that they recognized on the train, despite having travel permits, they made them leave the number of Germans and took them to the Gestapo of []. Then at the Gestapo they were taken to a room, they

Response : -were asked to turn towards the wall, they stayed about a half an hour in this position when an SS commandant came, he searched them and he didn't find anything on them and the SS took them near the station and there, in fact, opened fire on his sister, killed her, opened fire on his nephew, the nephew was hit with a bullet, he cried in Polish, and he turned around, the SS laughed, and he hit the SS in the stomach, the revolver fell, and he ran away. The nephew remained dead on the ground and the sister a little further also.

Box 46 ; Podchlebnik 15.

Question : Ask him who died in Chelmno.

R : -The whole family.

Q : -His?

R : -All my family.

Q : -What died in his heart?

R : -Everything died, but [] ... he had to forget.

Q : -And what died in his soul?

R : -He thanks God for what remains, and that he is forgetting, and that no one speaks of that.

Q : -Does he find that it's good to talk?

R : -It's not good, it's really not good ;

Q : -So why is he talking anyway?

R : -He's talking because now he is obligated to talk and

- Response : he received books about the Eichmann trial, where he was a witness, and he didn't read them.
- Question : -Did he survive as if he was living or as if he was dying?
- R : -When he was there he lived as if dead because he never thought that he would survive, but ... he was living.
- Q : -Why does he always smile?
- R : -What do you want him to do, cry? [at one time you smile, at one time you cry, and when you live it's best to smile.]
- Q : -And so, what happened after?
- R : -So when he ran away, he all of the sudden found himself in a he jumped a wall and he found himself in a barracks where there were Germans and he saw from afar, in another courtyard, he found a broom and he pretended to work to direct himself near a door, which he opened, no one prevented him, he left and he continued to walk because he had seen written signposts in Polish and there he succeeded in orienting himself a little and went to Reichhof ; in Reichhof he had family. And when he arrived, before entering the city, he there was a party where there were groups who worked in the fields, and he asked permission to sleep, to rest, but they refused him. So he was around a most poor [illegible] who let him sleep the whole night and the next morning he directed himself toward Reichhof ; when he arrived there, there was already a ghetto, there was a wall about 30 meters high, he turned about the wall, he found a courtyard, and he succeeded in climbing the wall and entering the ghetto. When he entered he wanted to go to the police and he found the police,

Response : -and there he met a police officer who knew him from his native city ; so the police officer, at his request, took him to the house of his brother-in-law's parents, he arrived there and he told the parents about the brother-in-law, what happened to the nephew and the sister and it was dramatic enough that everyone cried, it was Yom Kippur, and after some time there, the brother-in-law arrived, but his brother-in-law needed to be told what had happened to his son, he said they sent him to a camp, and that's how he stayed in the ghetto for two years.

Question : -He felt more protected in the ghetto than ... ?

R : -Of course ; and during these two years, his brother-in-law was angry with him, because he did not want to talk about them : he did not want to talk about them because he did not want to say what happened to the son ; for two years they were angry. So, in the ghetto, he registered and received a working permit and he went to work at the railroad station ; there the workers received 5 *zlotys* per day ; he had a guardian to give him his total salary against the possibility of leaving during work, which he agreed to, he left, he did business, he [illegible] his life and at night when the moment came to return with everyone, well, he returned.

Q : -And the ghetto, this ghetto, it existed for two years?

R : -There were two ghettos.

Q : -And the people in this ghetto weren't terminated?

R : -Much later ;

Q : -And this ghetto was in the region of Lodz?

R : - One day he passed in front of Auschwitz, but he

Response : -didn't even know that it was Auschwitz and the German who was guarding it asked if he wasn't scared to pass through here and he said no, because he did not know what it was, Auschwitz. The German said yes, it's Auschwitz.