

Transcript of the Shoah Interview with Richard Glazar

German Translation by Uta Allers - Volunteer – Visitor Services – Spring 2012

German Interview: G L A Z A R

German Cassette 12 - Side A

Bob. No. 137 (GL 1)

- Glazar: I was born in Prague in 1920 and come from an Indian family. My grandparents lived in the countryside and that's where I was raised. That's where I spent my youth, in a small city about 70 km east of Prague. My grandparents..
- Lanzmann: What name?
- Gl: Excuse me?
- La: What was the name of this city?
- Gl: Its name is Kolin (*Köln*), Kolin on the Elbe River. My grandparents had a farm there, and it was our custom to celebrate the Jewish holidays as well as the non-Jewish ones.
- La: Christmas.
- Gl: Christmas. Then I studied in Prague. In '38, I graduated. By that time, my parents had divorced. My father lived in Maehrisch-Ostrau. My mother remarried and her second husband later became, after the death of my father, my fa.. my second father. My father was deported at the beginning of the war. He was able to flee to Russia and there he..
- La: Excuse me, at the beginning of the war, that is, October '39.
- Gl: At the beginning of the war; that was October '38..
- La: That means he was sent to Nisko?
- Gl: Yes, that's it.
- La: Aha.

- Gl: That's it. He was deported to the concentration camp, Nisko. It was possible to flee from there, though the circumstances aren't clear to me. I heard about an exchange there with political prisoners from, from... from Germany, from Czechoslovakia and Russia. At any rate, within a short time I got news that my father was living in Russia and was working in a textile factory.
- La: Yes, but that's not the case. I know the story well of the first deportations to Nisko. Back then, they didn't know what to do with the Jews.
- Gl: That's possible.
- La: They wanted to try something out. And they sent these people from Prague, Vienna, Berlin too, about 5000 people, to Nisko to build a concentration camp.
- Gl: ...to build it (*uses a different word for "build" from Lanzmann's*)
- La: Yes, to build it.
- Gl: Yes, that's possible.
- La: Yes, but nothing was ready. It took several days or weeks, and they said, we don't know what to do with them. Keep going eastward. And it was very cold. And many people died.
- Gl: Died. That's how it went...
- La: And they (*crossed*) the Soviet border...
- Gl: ...crossed.
- La: ...crossed. I think that's...
- Gl: That's probably the route...that was probably my father's route. At that time, I got only a few letters from him. In the letters there was, sort of between the lines, that when he comes back, we won't believe what's he lived through. And then later – it was '39 already – we got the news that he died of a lung infection, and I even received a photo of him, as it...

- Gl: was the customary in Russia, the custom of a photo in an open casket. I still have that photo. So that was '39. At that time I was still allowed to enroll in a university; it was the University for Economic Studies in Prague. But shortly after that, there were... there were the student protests in Prague. The Germans were...
- La: The Germans were already...
- Gl: The Germans were already in Czechoslovakia. The Germans occupied Czechoslovakia in March '39, and... I think it was November 7, 1939, when the Germans took over all the Czech universities, closed them down and then persecuted the Czech students. And then things already got too hot in Prague and dangerous, and my parents sent me away from Prague to the countryside, and I worked as a farmhand, that is, for room and board with farmers.
- La: But your family was...
- Gl: My family...
- La: Your family was assimilated.
- Gl: More or less – the whole family was assimilated.
- La: Your feeling about...
- Gl: It was like this. (*This area*) formerly belonged to Austria-Hungary. My grandmother, for example, spoke better German than Czech, my grandfather too; there was a lot of Czech spoken in the family, partly German, but I went to Czech schools, and my colloquial language and my native tongue are still Czech to this very day.
- La: Yiddish wasn't spoken?
- Gl: Yiddish wasn't spoken at all. Religious education, that was kind of a strange thing, as we had more fun there than with anything else, and it wasn't really

- Gl: taken seriously.
- La: ...not seriously?
- Gl: No. My second father was fairly religious; he still observed Sabbath – and I'll talk later about that – I learned a bit of Hebrew from him.
- La: Yes
- Gl: Very little, just a few prayers. I want to come back to that later.
- La: Yes. What was his occupation?
- Gl: He had a leather business wholesale, a wholesale business in leather.
- La: Was he rich?
- Gl: One could say that he was fairly, a fairly rich man. Also, one could say that about my grandparents, who had a large farm and property. In addition, there was a moving company, which my uncle, that is, my mother's brother, had been running.
- La: And the relationships among your family were good?
- Gl: Yes, depending on how you look at it; just as with all other families. They were partly good and partly not good. I think that happens in every family. But I must say, that that was the best time of my youth – when I stayed at my grandparents' in Kolin on the Elbe River. I learned a lot from my grandfather there. I learned about the agricultural work and everything possible about rural life. So, actually I hid as a farmhand among the farmers till '42 and hoped that I could always live that way.
- La: The farmers knew that you (*were*) a Jew...?
- Gl: The farmers knew I was a Jew and back then, it was still possible. That was still tolerated at that time. In '41, I think,

Gl: ... it was in November, I...

Bob. No. 138 (GL 2)

Gl: Of course, there was anti-Semitism too in Czechoslovakia at that time between the two wars. But I have to say, I never suffered from it in any way. Maybe I was just too young back then. Most of my friends were not Jews. I would put it like this: In a country where a Franz Kafka and Max Brod and Franz Werfel lived, it just wasn't in good form to be an anti-Semite.

La: Yes.

Gl: And actually, only with the rise of Hitler, very, very slowly – actually, people made fun of it in the '30's when I was fourteen or fifteen, that is, in '34/'35. Only very slowly over time, did people become aware of the danger coming from Germany. And then, on the one hand, a very strong nationalism developed in Czechoslovakia; on the other hand, there were already groups sympathizing with the Germans. And so, bit by bit, an ominous atmosphere took hold, which first led to the occupation of the Sudetenland and then in '39, to the occupation of all of Czechoslovakia.

La: And your family didn't think about emigrating?

Gl: My father, my father had many friends abroad. After the occupation of the Sudetenland, my father flew to England with the thought that we could perhaps emigrate to England.

La: Not your father.

Gl: My second father, by the name of Bergmann. And he came back, and then he dropped the idea; at that time he was already almost

Gl: fifty years old; I'm only now comprehending, now that I'm over fifty myself, how hard it really is to leave everything and to start over at the age of fifty. That was actually my dilemma, but later. As I said, I lived as a farmer's helper, a day laborer among the farmers, and for me, for all practical purposes, life revolved around work in the fields and then there was eating, sleeping and reading.

La: ...and reading.

Gl: I've never read so many books as during this time – on those long winter evenings.

La: in '41...

Gl: '41/42, yes...

La: And you weren't... weren't afraid of...

Gl: I can't say that I was afraid. But maybe that was a function of age, I mean, maybe it had more to do with the age that with anything else, for with eighteen, with nineteen, one isn't so aware about age... one doesn't have a concept of time, one doesn't have a concept of age nor does one have the concept of danger.

La: And without foreboding...

Gl: One just isn't capable – I know that today – at that age, one just isn't capable of hating in that way.

La: ...to hate?

Gl: One is perhaps capable of loving, but one isn't capable at that age to hate. And, this I know today: The reality for someone at my age (*then*) is what is in the future and not what was in the past. What was, is the reality of an old person. So it was until '42, until September, no before that already – it was in the summer of '42. Suddenly I got – it was a big surprise for me – notification to appear in Prague for a registration, as it was termed. That was actually the first time

- Gl: back then, that I had to put on the Jewish star.
- La: Did you go to Prague?
- Gl: Yes for registration, so-called... I don't know just how they called it, the Jewish emigration office.
- La: Yes, it's also called the Jewish Federation.
- Gl: And this office, the emigration office, was in Prague in a villa, and the villa was only a few steps away from where my future wife used to live. She was sixteen at the time and I didn't know her yet.
- La: And you wore a Star of David?
- Gl: For the first time actually, I wore a Jewish star and went with the orders, with a paper to Prague – I had to, for the registration – and there they stamped a “J” with notifications in my identity card. But there were only Germans there. That was... that was a German administrative agency. And then I came back. And that was in the summer – I think, it was in May or June '42, and in September then, I got an order to appear in Prague on September 8 at a so-called exhibition palace and that meant going in a transport.
- La: And your parents?
- Gl: My parents were deported – a year before that, I think, '41; it was November, and learned later they were deported to Lodz. In the fall of '41, those were actually the first Jewish transports from Prague to the various concentration camps, into the various so-called ghettos.
- La: Yes, East Ghettos.
- Gl: So, my parents weren't deported to Theresienstadt, but rather to Lodz.
- La: You got news? How did you...
- Gl: During that year I got a few postcards,

Gl: just postcards from my parents, in which they wrote briefly, very briefly, that they were well, but needed money and food. Honestly, I could hardly imagine that my parents needed money and food. And back then, I just didn't comprehend that someone would go hungry or be without resources.

La: Yes. *(To camera: Cut!)*

Bob. No. 139 (GL 3)

Gl: Besides, at nineteen, I didn't take things so seriously, not seriously. It's true that when back then in '41, my parents called me and said good-bye before they had to go on the transport, I cried the entire way to the post office, and that was more than 5 kilometers. Where I lived there was no telephone. I had to walk to the post office and back. I remember that I cried all the way back, but somehow, I didn't see this as a tragedy.

La: But what did your mother say?

Gl: Well, what parents usually say. I should take care of myself, I should behave myself as a (*decent*) human being, and I should survive, should see to it that I survive. And then, my second father told me something in Hebrew and I understood . .

La: On the telephone?

Gl: On the telephone and I understood that it was a blessing. Then my deportation followed in September '42, September 8, 1942. That was such a strange feeling. I was used to working the whole day and to work hard with the horses, in the field, in the field. To mow with a scythe, for instance, and suddenly I found myself in a large, in this large collection area. In Prague.

La: How exactly did it happen? Did you get a notification?



Gl: I got a notification, an order to (*appear*) on September 8, '42 in the so-called Exhibition Palace, that was the collection point for the Jewish transports. That's where I was to appear and with it I got . . . the notification was also the train ticket.

La: You didn't consider fleeing?

Gl: I did think about fleeing and more than once, but back then there was the Heydrich Affair, after the assassination of Heydrich, and at that time, the Nazis were raging through all of Bohemia and Moravia. Every day there were newspapers – the front page was full of names of those executed. And everyone who was suspect in any way, suspect, or who didn't behave properly, was somehow suspect or they connected him in some way with . . . with the . . . with the rebels . . . with the sympathizers and participants of the assassination of Heydrich. Besides, I already had my "J" in the identification papers. So, wherever I would have gone, I would have been arrested.

La: Yes, that's clear. But you had . . .

Gl: It was that way back then already; back then I was overcome with the feeling, a feeling of . . . of, I have to say, of powerlessness. That somehow came over me slowly. I remember. Sometimes, I had to go from the place where I worked – that was an isolated place – with the horses and a wagon into the city, to the mill with corn to get flour. So I had to wear the star, the Jewish star. I can remember, I went past the wagon and I played a game with myself. On the sidewalk, the walkway, I looked for disabled people, the humpbacks and those who limped and who were somehow, those who weren't quite . . . that is, physically, not quite normal, and I said to myself: With whom would I exchange my Jewish star and with whom not?

La: Aha...

- Gl: And just this feeling of powerlessness, I just couldn't shake it off. We stayed in that collection area for two days.
- La: This exhibition . .
- Gl: In this Exhibition Palace. For me it was again that feeling that I was useless there. People just went to get something to eat and then waited for news. We heard this and that. No one knew when the whole transport would start, and of course, under such circumstances various rumors went around, which were called latrine news.
- La: Latrine news?
- Gl: Latrine news. And that is something – I know it now – it slowly wears you down.
- La: Slowly?
- Gl: Slowly wears you down.
- La: Did you . . did you know by then, where, what the destination of . . this transport . .
- Gl: I didn't know exactly what the destination of this transport was, but over and over I heard: Theresienstadt, Theresienstadt. And so I told myself, that's not so bad because that's where my cousins, my uncle and aunt were supposed to be living already – they were deported earlier.
- La: You knew that?
- Gl: Yes. From Kolin on the Elbe, my maternal grandfather and my paternal grandmother. I had had news about them. They were deported to Theresienstadt and they lived there. In the early morning on September 10 . .
- La: Excuse me, you said that it was a big surprise for you because you were used to . .
- Gl: Yes, I was used to working hard everyday, on Saturdays and Sundays too. On the farm, there's no Saturday

Gl: and no Sunday. The horses and cows have to eat and be fed. And the feed, the green feed, has to be mowed, including Saturdays and Sundays, so it's fresh. I was used to working practically every day and suddenly I was cut off from it and I felt completely useless, like... like... like an old person.

La: Somehow...

Gl: Then on September 10, very early in the morning...it always came out of nowhere. I don't know exactly from where, there came an order to assemble with all our luggage – we were allowed to have 50 kilos; 50 kilos was quite a lot. It was very little for people who'd had a normal life. It was a lot for someone who had to carry it. I didn't have 50 kilos nor did the others.

Bob. No. 140 (GL 4)

Gl: Back then when they forcibly moved us all out in the early morning, I had such a strange... strange realization. They counted us as a whole. Then I saw that it was Jews who were counting us. They wore Jewish stars. And then I thought, yes, they don't have to go on the transport yet; as long as they still have Jews they can count, they don't have to get into the transport themselves. And then they led us to the train station. And the feeling I had at the time was also... so awful... On the street normal people passed by around us. Just like that, passed us by. Life was completely normal. And then I was overcome by a feeling of... again, helplessness, also rage, terrible rage. I saw that people pitied us. Then it was time to get into the train. They were normal passenger cars, and everything went well for maybe two, three hours, till we arrived, and then

- Gl: we were told, this is Theresienstadt. During the ride, I actually thought about jumping out and fleeing. And then I gave those thoughts up because I didn't see any chances of getting away. And besides, it wasn't possible without help. And if I'd told someone about it, I would have severely endangered that person.
- La: Yes, of course.
- Gl: So, we got out at the train station in Theresienstadt.
- La: Boschowitze?
- Gl: Boschowitze. And then we had to walk with all that luggage for an hour to Theresienstadt. The fall that year was beautiful, very hot. I had put on two pairs of pants, two sweaters, because, what you were wearing, was the most secure. You couldn't get around that. And so I walked in the heat, a rucksack on my back, a bag and a suitcase. And people, that is, also older people, collapsed.
- La: Collapsed. Were there many old people?
- Gl: There were many old people with us. Then we finally arrived and received an assignment for a place to sleep, and when I arrived there with some others, (*I saw that*) it was a stable, a perfectly ordinary stable. You have to see it this way: Theresienstadt was actually a fortress built by (*Empress*) Maria-Theresia, thus the name, Theresienstadt, and the biggest part of the city were barrack and, of course, stables for horses. So, for the first while, I slept in a stable under a trough.
- La: You were a big group?
- Gl: There were a lot of people. Everything, everything imaginable, all mixed together – families, man, women, children, etc., all

Gl: together.

La: September, '42. That was the worst time in Theresienstadt.

Gl: It was September 10, 1942. But right on the same day, my cousin found me and brought me something to eat. She was already, shall we say, settled in Theresienstadt, somehow had squatter's rights there, and she informed me about my grandfather and my grandmother. Then, the first thing I did was visit my grandmother. And I came into a... it was a regular house. But there was only one room and in this room on the floor, there were twelve, not beds, just on the floor about twelve sleeping places. And one of them was my grandmother's.

La: There were only old women there?

Gl: There were only old women in the room... there in the room.

La: Together... on the floor.

Gl: ...on the floor and there was strange smell, as I recall. But what I didn't understand at all was... I gave my grandmother some of the food I had brought with me, a little canning jar of lard, and she accepted it. As a youth and as a boy, when I offered her something, I was accustomed to her refusing it and saying, "No, that's for you."

La: She was hungry.

Gl: That was completely new for me. And then I went to visit my grandfather. And he was housed in a place called a hospital. He didn't want to live anymore and he had cut his arteries. He didn't quite succeed.

La: Really, he did that?

Gl: Yes. He was already 78 or 79 back then.

- La: A kind of...
- Gl: Yes, he tried to commit suicide.
- La: How did you know? He told you or you..
- Gl: That was... the cousin told me and brought me there. He was there... I have to use the coarse expression, but there's no sense in whitewashing it. It would make you puke there. Everything dirty, everything covered with grime, blood everywhere.
- La: Blood everywhere?
- Gl: That's where my grandfather was.
- La: Why blood?
- Gl: There were... people probably had open wounds, open (*wounds on the*) legs and such. All old people. I think, for a blink of an eye, my grandfather recognized me. I don't know exactly. And it was the last time I saw my grandfather.
- La: He died in Theresienstadt?
- Gl: He died that day; he lived a little while, then he died just before I was deported further. I didn't have the courage to go again. I worked hard in Theresienstadt; I worked in a garbage detachment, that was the so-called "Garbage Detachment" and simply carried garbage out..

Bob. No. 141 (GL 5)

- Gl: I must say that I did pretty well in Theresienstadt; that is, what is called in French: "Je me suis assez bien débrouillé à Theresienstadt". I moved then – it was a big room and

- Gl: and about 50 people slept there together. There were, however, lots of fleas and bedbugs, but I didn't sleep on the wooden platform – I slept on... on the concrete floor. It wasn't so bad there. I didn't actually have to work all that much. Less than before on the farm. I moved the garbage and, what was a surprise to me, I always found something to eat in the garbage, and so I actually always had enough bread. That was also a surprise for me. In Theresienstadt there was enough bread – bad bread, but there was enough.
- La: Bread, just bread..
- Gl: Just bread, just bread.
- La: Was there meat?
- Gl: No meat. I didn't see any meat.
- La: But the nutritional conditions were basically very bad, weren't they?
- Gl: The nutritional conditions were certainly not good. Many people, and this I saw, were malnourished. But for a 19-year old like me, I just didn't really notice it.
- La: But do you know a bit..
- Gl: And during this time and the entire first weeks, I still had something from... from home, which the farmer woman had given me, lard and such in canning jars, and I always took a bit of it and spread the lard on the bread. I'd had that the whole time in my rucksack and so I managed it, I must say, very frugally.
- La: But could you describe Theresienstadt a bit? Did one have... the feeling that it was a parody society...?
- Gl: Well, my impression, when I arrived in Theresienstadt..
- La: For example, for you... all these Jews together.

- Gl: A whole different world. I said to myself: a city without traffic. But the streets were always full of people. Everywhere, wherever you went, it was full of people. Streets full of people. Sometimes, I still (*remember*) that everywhere . . . I remember that, well, people moved about as in Karlsbad on the promenade. For me, it was simply an unbelievable sensation – as a parody, a parody of life of what I knew from the outside.
- La: And why a parody . . . I understand, but I don't understand that . . .
- Gl: Maybe what was parodic was . . . that life here was focused and driven, but there was no meaning for life. There was no point to life. There was only waiting. If anything, then the goal of life was waiting. Waiting for the end, waiting to survive. That was Theresienstadt. And of course, then something developed, which (*determined*) my entire life story, and throughout my entire survival during the war, and that was the so-called “speculation”, meaning, always get yourself something in unofficial ways – something to eat, maybe something to repair, to repair shoes, clothes. Sewing and such was a problem. You had to know how to do it and for that you had to give something. No money, of course. Something to eat or such. And out of that, a kind of game developed. And this game, this speculation, that was also perhaps . . . I don't want to say a meaning for living, but it was what filled up our lives and was actually a substitute for a normal life.
- La: I understand. And to see all these Jews together. Was it a shock for you? Because it was the first time . . .
- Gl: I can't say, I can't say it was . . . it was a shock . . . it was a surprise for me. I had already



- Gl: seen people there, whom I had met in Prague and about whom I found out only now that they were Jews. I met them before, but I . . . it was never stated that one is a Jew. That was a surprise to me. That man is here!
- La: Suddenly.
- Gl: Suddenly. He's a Jew too. He's a . . . he's targeted too. So let's say, a feeling of satisfaction. He's in the same boat.
- La: Aha. He's in the same boat.
- Gl: One could perhaps say it that way. Yes. That's how I lived from one day to the next.
- La: And the Jewish officials . . . the Jewish Council . . .
- Gl: The members of the Jewish Council, I had . . . I had nothing to do with them. I didn't even know about them. I only knew that there was a sort of news center, simply that the news spread, people passed it on, it trickled through us and then we learned about various things, but couldn't fully believe it; you never knew if it was really true or not true. Is it true, is it false? Is it going to get worse, as we heard it or not?
- La: When you arrived in Theresienstadt, no one officially spoke and explained anything?
- Gl: No, no, not with us, not with us. And then I got into a different detachment, but of course, through relationships and acquaintances. My cousin, actually, both cousins and my aunt helped me with that. And then I was with the moving/hauling detachment. And that was the detachment which always drove to the train station and drove the luggage which people couldn't carry, into the city.

- La: Yes, yes. And did the Jews in Theresienstadt talk about the transports to the East?
- Gl: Yes, we heard that there were transports to the East. And then, in fairly short intervals, many of us again got notification to go to a transport, and on the notification it always said to another ghetto in the East. That was an official... a sort of official expression.
- La: And people were afraid of this...
- Gl: People were always afraid. I know of some people... you just couldn't be sick in a normal way. I know of cases in which people gave themselves injections – milk injections. After a milk injection, you get a very high fever. And this way, only with a very high fever – a doctor had to confirm it and this was a Jewish doctor, and he himself was always in danger, and he risked a deportation to the East, so he had to have very clear evidence.

Cassette No. 12 - Side B

Bob. No. 142 (GL 6)

- Gl: One day when I was driving my garbage carts, I saw a man who was hauling another cart. And that was a kind transport for corpses. And I recognized this man to be my religion teacher from Prague, Mr. Grünefeld. I greeted him and asked, as you would, how he was doing. “Well, as you see, I'm a corpse hauler. What else is left for a teacher of religion in Theresienstadt?” Well, I was ashamed of myself, for I had given him a rough time in religion class. I also met older people, whom I had met as acquaintances of my parents, and who, back then, were for me highly respected people.

- Gl: And that was actually another such sad surprise. I just didn't see them there as respectable anymore. And I said to myself, they're actually completely ordinary people, just like all others. And I knew that among them were very rich people.
- La: Yes, and this, this fear of the East, the transports to the East?
- Gl: That was always the biggest fear. And that was the thing that dominated your whole life. Fear that it could get worse. Again and again, fear that it could get worse, and worse meant deportation to a different ghetto in the East or deportation further into the East. And people did everything and tried everything, not to have to go on a transport.
- La: What was the image of the East – as you see it?
- Gl: The image of the East was that there are ghettos where there is much less... where there is much less to eat and where it's even worse, where there are even more people, and something else – where one will be separated from one's friends and family, for there were families, who received notification for the transport, for instance, for only one member of the family, not the whole family. And there... the people had to decide if they should stay here or if they should voluntarily go with their relatives on the transport.
- La: But what was the East? Poland, Russia...?
- Gl: The East was Poland. The East was Poland. The East was Poland. It could be Lodz, it could be Warsaw. Well, I personally never knew exactly and I didn't try to find out. Perhaps I had an advantage – I was alone. I was completely alone. When I look at it from today's perspective, (*I was*) completely free, unencumbered by family and unencumbered by old people.

- Gl: And one day, I got the notification to (*go to*) another ghetto in the East. Start date was October 8, starting date October 8, 1942.
- La: That means, about one month after your arrival.
- Gl: It was almost exactly one month after I was deported to Theresienstadt. And... I don't know why, but for the first time back then, I went to someone whom I'd met shortly to show him this. His name was Karl Unger and he was from Ohlmetz.
- La: Karl Unge? You... him...
- Gl: He worked in a similar detachment as I and I can remember, it was toward evening, after work hours. He was sitting on the wooden platform and said to me, "Well, then we'll go together. I got that order too, as did my whole family."
- La: And his whole family.
- Gl: His father, his mother and his brother. And somehow that made things easier for me. He said, "Fine, then we'll all be together there."
- La: Were you friends already?
- Gl: Not really. We only saw each other a few times in passing. But somehow, we had established a connection. So, on October 8 we moved on. And then I myself lived through what I had previously only helped others to do. For the latter part (*of my stay*) I had been in the moving/hauling detachment, which meant I helped people who had to go on a transport.
- La: On the same transport?
- Gl: On the same transport and those before me, who were deported further with the transports. I clearly remember

- Gl: the number of the transports. All the transports were numbered. The transport on which I came to Theresienstadt was marked with Bg, capital B, small g. In between were transports. . .
- La: You said Theresienstadt.
- Gl: To Theresienstadt. That transport was marked with Bg, capital B, small g. And then there were several transports in between, perhaps with Bv or Bh, for instance, as the alphabet goes: Bs, Bt – they continue on to the East. All luggage, all suitcases had to have the code of the transport on them. And the transport with which I went further to the East, was marked with Bu, capital B, small u. These were normal train cars again, passenger cars. . .
- La: Passenger. . .
- Gl: Yes. . . and the train drove very slowly at times.
- La: And there were many people in every compartment?
- Gl: Every seat was taken. Every seat was taken. Every compartment, every seat was taken.
- La: People stood up, stayed standing?
- Gl: I remember they had a few. . . it wasn't SS who were guarding us. It was the so-called. . . I think they called them Schupo (Schutzpolizei = *security police*) back then. People in green uniforms. And I still remember that I was made into a watchman too. They gave me an armband with the name "Ordner = *guard*". So, those were the people who had to keep order. They simply picked out younger, strong people and the commandant even assembled us before the departure and told us. . .
- La: Was the commandant the escort?
- Gl: The. . . the. . . the security team. He told us, "Well, I. . . you. . .

Gl: are 1000 people (*in German: 1000 heads*). I have to bring 1000 people to the destination. If someone on the way tries even to put his head out of the window, shoot. Then he gets hit.”

La: 1000 people.

Gl: 1000 people. If someone puts his head out the window during the trip, then...

La: (*to interpreter*) How do you translate that?

Someone: des tetes = the heads

La: What about the heads? How, how...

Bob. No. 143 (GL 7)

Gl: “So, I have to deliver 1000 people, and I’m telling you, if someone sticks his head out the window during the trip, shoot.” I should interject something else here. The transport with which I was deported from Prague, was a transport with people no longer in Prague, because Prague was pretty much empty of Jews by then. It was mostly Jews from the rural areas. Most of them were farmers or those who lived on farms and worked there, as for instance, a Jewish miller on this transport, who had a mill to which I drove with the horses and the grain. And others, very strong people actually. And to my surprise, many of them were... I saw that also in the transport to... going further to the East. Karl Unger and his family were among them. They came from Ohlmetz. The father was a beer brewer in Ohlmetz. But he was in a different compartment, in a different train car. You couldn’t choose your own seat; they were all numbered; they were all assigned. In my compartment were two older married people. I still

Gl: remember. The nice man constantly wanted something to eat and the woman warned him not to eat so much, for then they'd have nothing left for later. There was also an acquaintance in the compartment with whom I often – though he was older – with whom I often played ping pong. We drove for two days. I lost track of time, actually. I slept a lot and the next day, in the morning, we saw that we were no longer in Czechoslovakia, we're in... that we were moving somewhere in an easterly direction, and we suspected we were in Poland. The train stopped a lot.

La: Where? At a station?

Gl: It wasn't directly at a station, it was somewhere on the way. And then, on the second day, I recall... there came... we were pretty sure by that time that we were in Poland, for we saw Polish signs. And then came a sort of... It wasn't a station, it was just a little stop, that is, a small building and above the building, I saw the name "Malkinia". Then we drove a bit further. Then suddenly the train drove very slowly from the main line, we could see that, took a turn and drove very, very slowly through woods.

La: The train didn't stop at the "Treblinka" station?

Gl: And after that, after a short distance, the train stopped. And then when we looked out, and we did open the window a bit, and we (*saw*) a strange area – something was lying there everywhere.

La: Everywhere?

- Gl: There was something lying everywhere. Stuff was everywhere. It was actually a countryside, there were fields and meadows, but suddenly there'd be a cap or over there you'd see a piece of clothing and then something else, like a scarf or such. And the old man in our compartment saw someone – that was a .. he was tending cows and he asked the boy, but only with gestures, what .. where we are. *(no video)* And he made a strange gesture... Like this!
- La: At his neck ..
- Gl: A drill.
- La: But where was it? Was it at the train station?
- Gl: It was where the train stopped. On one side were the woods and on the other were fields and meadows.
- La: And there was a farmer on this field.
- Gl: And that's where we saw cows grazing, and there was a boy, a young man, a farmhand, or such, a servant.
- La: Someone from the train asked ..
- Gl: Someone asked – just with gestures, gesticulated .. he asked with gestures what is going on. And he in turn made this gesture. This here. But we really didn't pay him much attention or we just couldn't make sense of it. And then ..
- La: Didn't even ..
- Gl: *(video resumes)* And then .. that gesture, we really didn't, didn't .. And then I noticed that .. the cars were being separated, that only one section continued on. And then we were already driving through a gate onto a ramp. I could see the ramp. And everything around it green.
- La: Green?
- Gl: Green. Green walls, a green fence. *(no video)* And in that moment it started. Yelling, screaming. "Get out, everyone out!"



La: Yelling?

Gl: Yelling. Yelling, bellowing, lots of noise. "Get out, everyone out, leave your luggage." Then we got out, one on top of another, saw people with blue armbands and some had whips in their hands. And then we saw some SS men. Then we saw green uniforms, then again we... (*video resumes*) Then we saw people with black uniforms. And just... it was a mass.

La: Lots of people. There were lots of people on this ramp?

Gl: There weren't so many people on the... on this ramp. The ramp was relatively narrow. And in this mass, we were all moving; nothing else was possible; the mass had to move toward another place. And there I saw, people were separated... In the middle were SS men, and now they split us up. Men to the right, women with children to the left. And... I was in the habit of not hurrying. Then I was often the last one. And you could find something out indirectly from someone else. And I saw the others were undressing. And I heard "undress"; we were to undress. We are to go into a disinfection shower.

La: Everything in German?

Gl: Everything in German. My first impression wasn't so bad. I said to myself, that looks pretty good. That's a big farm, a big agricultural concern. Well, I know my way around that. It could be pretty good there. And I was already standing there naked.

La: How long between arrival and this undressing?

Gl: That went really fast, maybe fifteen minutes...

La: That fast?

Gl: No more than that. You have to realize, the distances were very short . . . I'll come back to that. And I was standing there naked, October 10<sup>th</sup> . . .

Bob. No. 144 (GL 8)

Gl: And as I was standing there naked, suddenly I saw that the SS men had pulled a few aside, and they had to get dressed again. I didn't know what that meant.

La: Excuse me. All these naked people together . . . you didn't have . . . you didn't have a premonition (*uses the French "presentiment"*)?

Gl: Premonition (*uses the German word "Vorahnung"*).

La: Premonition?

Gl: No, not at all. I didn't . . . I was completely clueless. I was completely . . . I just couldn't imagine because during the whole time, I was . . . and at the age of 21 or 22 back then, I lived in the conviction, well, they can't cut my head off and everything else, I'll get through.

La: Yes.

Gl: And as I was standing there naked, I saw that some who had been taken aside, they had to . . . they got dressed again, and at that point the whole line had started to move. And then an SS man passed by me, turned around, took a good look at me and said, "Yes, yes, yes, you too, come, come, come quickly, you come too, come, come quickly to the others and get dressed. No watches, no knives. You will work there too and if you prove yourself, you can become a foreman or a Kapo."

La: He said that? In the beginning?

Gl: That was the beginning. And so I quickly got dressed, stood next to the others – we were about . . . eighteen. The others, we could see, were led further

Gl: and we were led back through the gate, through which we had come to the so-called undressing station, and we were led to a barrack. And when we arrived there, the whole barrack was full of stench with people who were jumping around. Again, we heard yelling and orders and, maybe as high as 1.5 meters, there was in the barrack just a mass of everything possible that people had brought with them: linens, suitcases and . . . all kinds of stuff, all mixed up together in one big pile.

La: Mountains . . .

Gl: Above the mass – they weren't mountains – it was just one single level in the barrack. And – that was an incredible image for me . . . above the mass, jumping around like little demons were people who were yelling in, what was for me, an unknown language, and were pulling on the things. Then I saw that they were making packages out of that. They would always look for a bed sheet, into which they put items of clothing, which they would carry out of the barrack. And I was assigned to someone who had an armband with the word "Foreman". And the first thing he told me, he yelled at me, also in something that sounded German but it wasn't quite German. And I understood that I should get myself a bed sheet like that too and put belongings into the bed sheet and should go out of the barrack with it to a different site. And when I did that, packing the belongings up like that, I asked him, "Say, what's going on? What's happening? What's going on with the others, the naked ones?"

La: You asked him that?

Gl: I asked him that. And then he answered, that was so . . . but I understood; he said, "dead, all dead". (*He uses the word "teut" which sounds like the German "tot".*)

Gl: Dead (*teut*). I couldn't get it. I still didn't believe it.

La: What is "teut"? That's Yiddish.

Gl: That's a Jewish (*he means "Yiddish"*) word. I must admit that it was the first time I heard Yiddish.

Bob. No. 144 (GL 9)

Gl: (*no video*) He didn't say it very loud, and I saw that as he did, he had tears in his eyes. But suddenly he yelled at me, raised the whip, and from the corner of my eye, I saw that an SS man was approaching. Then I realized: "Now I can't ask any more questions; now I have to run out with the package."

La: (*video resumes*) But when he said, "alle teut" (all dead), did you understand that "teut"...

Gl: I understood that. When he said "alle teut, alle teut, alle teut" (all dead, all dead, all dead), I understood that they're dead, but at that moment... in that moment, I couldn't yet imagine that they really were dead. I... the first image was that they are somehow done for. But not dead! Then I... like the others, I threw a package over my shoulder and went out of the barrack, and there, in that moment, I felt a terrible blow.

La: A blow.

Gl: Yes, here in the neck. And I turned around slightly and saw someone in a black uniform, who stood in front of the barrack door and gave everyone who came out a lash with the whip as a matter of routine.

La: A Ukrainian?

Gl: Later I... it became clear... I learned that it was one of the Ukrainian guards. And now I saw the enormous site for the first time, and it was covered with mountains of all possible items. Everything under the sun was lying around there. Mountains, perhaps ten meters high, of shoes, clothing, a small pile of crutches, etc., etc. And then I could see where to put the package. Then I got another blow. Then I figured out that you can't go at a normal pace there; you have to run all the time. So, I ran back, and now my only thought was "Karl Unger". I knew he was in the back section of the train and the back part was separated and left outside.

La: Why was that your only thought?

Gl: It's like this: With the transports from the West, they let only 500 people on, who were then forcibly driven into the gas chamber, and after that another 500, because of the whole business, because of the whole sequencing. I learned that later. And then somehow, my only thought was "Karl Unger". Karl Unger was... I wanted someone... beside me, with me. And then I saw him. He came with the second group. They (*separated*) him out too...

La: Because he was young and strong.

Gl: (*no video*) And somehow he already knew on the way, he learned... He gave me a look and said only, "Father, mother, brother". He had heard on the way already.

La: This encounter with Karl and you, how long was that after the arrival?

Gl: That was... about (*video resumes*) twenty minutes after arriving in Treblinka.

La: Just twenty minutes – no more?

Gl: Yes, that went . . . that went so fast. The whole thing took place in an assembly line. They got 500 people out of the train cars . . . got them in. They got out, got undressed and in a moment, they went through the so-called tube . . .

Bob. No. 146 (GL 10)

Gl: Then we – Karl and I – automatically did what the others did. Of course, spurred on by the lashes of the whip. Simply went into the barrack, tore belongings out of the layer, stuffed them into a bed sheet, out onto the big area and piled it on. And when I went out to the area a third or fourth time, a piece of paper money flew into my face. Those were lying around everywhere. Everything under the sun.

La: In this area?

Gl: In this area. We soon learned that it was called the sorting station.

La: Paper money . . .

Gl: And on it went. Always the same. And then I got the sense, and I told Karl, “We are in . . . there’s a huge storm, we’re on a raging sea. We are shipwrecked. And . . . our ship got shipwrecked. And we’re still alive. And we can’t do much now. As the waves come, we just have to ride out every wave and somehow anticipate the next one and get over it. Nothing more.” By that time, it was getting dark.

La: At what time . . .

Gl: A whistle went. That must have been six thirty, seven o’clock.

La: And when did the train arrive?

Gl: The train . . . the train arrived about three thirty.

- Gl: And from about four in the afternoon to seven, we worked as the new slaves in Treblinka .. we knew that already... gathering what the dead left behind and carrying it out of the barrack.
- La: The people from your transport?
- Gl: Those weren't the belongings from that transport, the one we came with. But on one place I saw piled up suitcases with the letters Bs, Bt .., transports which preceded ours and went further to the East. Then there was a whistle, around seven maybe; it was already getting dark, a bit dark, and we were forced to go to another site, where there was a kitchen, where food was handed out. Everyone got a bowl of soup. But no one ate it because there was so much at the time of the transports, everything under the sun, that everyone dumped the soup out.
- La: You were allowed to...?
- Gl: Yes, it was like this. In Treblinka nothing was permitted. You could do anything. You .. you just better not get caught. Somehow, in Treblinka everything was abnormal, everything was as if from another planet. Or actually, you could say, everything that was and is unbelievable – I learned that later. Everything was incredible; whatever you could imagine in your wildest fantasies was normal in Treblinka. *(no video)* And so it was normal too, that every person behind whom the gate closed, was dead, had to be dead, because he could bear witness! And that I knew after the first three hours in Treblinka!
- La: *(video resumes)* Was it hard to imagine, how... how does one learn to...

Gl: How do you learn . . .

La: When did you . . .

Gl: . . . to adapt yourself to such circumstances, meaning, how does one learn to live beyond the threshold of death or beyond the threshold of life? . . . That's what I experienced there. There is no other creature as adaptable as a human being. Maybe I should add that he has to be a certain age. He has to be relatively young. And then somehow you become perhaps no longer a human being; you become an animal and you sense somehow what is coming at you, even if you don't turn around, you sense that an SS man is looking at you. Without turning around, without seeing; you realize too, when he isn't there. That's where you can get a bit of a break maybe. All that is . . . at least in my case and Karl's, I know, it went very fast. On the first night, we were forced into a barrack – by that time we knew we were in Treblinka. By the way, it's a nice name.

La: But were you in this barrack with Jews who were already in Treblinka . . .?

Gl: And then they had us. It was like this in Treblinka: there were various areas and around every area was a fence, a high fence with barbed wire, interwoven with brushwood, with something green, with green branches from trees and those were the green walls and that's why the first impression was very good. That's why the whole thing looked so good. Green and beyond that, sand everywhere.

La: Sand . . .

Gl: Just sand. At night we were forced into a different place and a different barrack. There was just a barrack and the floor was sand. There was nothing, no sleeping platform, nothing. Sand, only sand . . . at that time. And everyone just collapsed there. So wherever the person was, that's where he stayed.



- Gl: Collapsed and . . . fell asleep or not. It depended. Some . . . I sort of sensed or heard that in my semi-conscious state, that some hung themselves.
- La: You heard that?
- Gl: Only in my semi-conscious state.
- La: In the barrack?
- Gl: In the barrack. One had medication on him; he took the medication.
- La: Committed suicide?
- Gl: Yes, yes . . . he committed suicide. There were such cases in Treblinka, but that was normal for Treblinka. You took it almost as normal then.
- La: Were there suicides every night?
- Gl: Not every night.

Bob. No. 147 (GL 11)

- La: Richard, I want to come back to that first day in Treblinka because, after all, that is what is most difficult to imagine for someone who has never been there. What did you understand, what did you learn during that first day, how to handle it, this shock, this terrible shock. Were you in shock in the beginning? Were you afraid?
- Gl: It wasn't fear that came upon you. I can't call it that. Or if it was, then it's the fear that is always in you and with you, and you behave accordingly. Actually . . . you actually turn into an animal, a hunted animal. And you behave like a hunted animal too. Of course, a hunted animal with human intelligence. And I want to say more about that. Something unique happened when the transport with

Gl: which I came, arrived. On the first one, they separated out Jews from Bohemia and Moravia from the transport, about eighteen. And that was the small so-called Czech group in Treblinka, and from this group, another smaller one was put together, to which Karl and I belonged. Later, another one was added from another transport; that was quite momentous. From a 5000-person transport, one single person was pulled out.

La: One?

Gl: Only one... by the name of Jelomir Bloch.

La: From Czechoslovakia.

Gl: And he came from Slovakia. He had been an officer in the army, the Czechoslovakian army. And as unbelievable as everything was in Treblinka, as an incredible coincidence would have it, he (*became*) the organizer... the yet-to-be organizer of the revolt. To that group, in the Czech group, which then formed itself, on the next day already, was also a doctor, named Robert Altschuh, as well as others, and the first thing we thought about together, what we should actually do... what we should do or how we would survive. So, soon after the initial shock... that initial shock lasted a few hours, usually only the first day, maybe also the second day. There were...

La: No more?

Gl: No, no. There were some who didn't survive this shock. There were the following cases: hung themselves, took medication... at that time there were so many transports that there was also lots of medication. So, they simply poisoned themselves.

La: Poison?

Gl: Yes. And then there were cases, where... I recall one case, where someone came and told the SS man that he wanted to die like his wife and children. He wanted the same death... in the gas chamber. So, they sent him to the gas chamber with the others.

La: I don't understand...

Gl: They took someone out of a transport... I think it was also a transport from Theresienstadt. I don't know whether he was a Czech or German Jew. But he was separated out and his wife and child were sent to the gas chamber. And when he found out, he went to the SS, to an SS man, and told him he wanted the same death, he wanted to go the same way...

La: He himself...

Gl: Yes, just like his wife and child. Granted, perhaps none of those are proven events in Treblinka, but everything was possible, that people hung themselves, that people said they no longer wanted to live... I witnessed that... in the... in the early period in Treblinka.

- La: For example, Steiner writes that every day...
- Gl: No, not every day. Not every day and only during the early period of... shall we say... being at someone's mercy, when the SS didn't have it all running smoothly and well organized. So, we thought about... thought about, just how we... how we should act under these conditions, because we wanted to live! All of us!
- La: But it's not clear for us, were you... did you know that all the people who came in the same transport were dead and what kind of death, gassed, etc.?
- Gl: We, and I especially, worked the entire time in the front part of the camp. That part was called Camp 1 or the Reception Camp, and in the second part of the camp was the gas chamber and there... directly by the gas chamber, I never worked there. But of course, we saw, we saw the tractor working. It dug up all the sand and everything, and we knew...
- La: No, no, I mean the first time you knew that all the people who came with you are...
- Gl: Are dead.
- La: Yes dead, are dead and what kind of death – gassing.
- Gl: Yes. Then... that was the first day, I was told that bit by bit, gradually, that the people are going into the gas chamber and are killed in the gas chambers.
- La: And you believed them?

- Gl: And then when I saw the belongings, the mountains of belongings, all the remains... And when I saw what the SS men were doing with us and the Ukrainians, I believed it. Then there was no doubt about it, the whole thing. But most convincing were the mountains of belongings and the transports which came in steadily, more and more.
- La: And you saw the transports?
- Gl: I (*saw*) the transports, at least...
- La: In your area?
- Gl: ...or, or at least heard them, I did, that the trains were arriving. And I heard the people screaming, and I heard the children crying and the women. During the early period. In the later phase I saw them, because later I worked in a barrack, and through the rear of the barrack, I could see everything, what was... happening on the ramp.
- La: Where were the women, the children crying, during the early period?
- Gl: In the undressing station. The undressing station was close to the sorting place where we worked.
- La: Did the people understand, what fate...?
- Gl: It depended. That was... The transports were treated in various ways, depending on where they came from. When the transport from the West came, the so-called, that is, in quotation marks, "Reich Transports", as for instance, the transports from Theresienstadt, with which I came. Those were treated well.

Gl: They weren't beaten. They were told that they would go to a disinfection shower in order to work later on. Of course, before the train cars, before the train arrived at the ramp, the gate to the sorting place and all entrances were closed. Only the gate to the undressing station was open. And from the dressing station, the way led through the tube, a narrow passage to the gas chamber.

La: Did you see this tube?

Gl: I saw the tube, yes. I sometimes worked there, cleaned, etc. At a later... at a later time period, when I worked in the camouflage detachment, we had to maintain the fence everywhere, which was part of our responsibility.

La: How was this tube? How long, how wide, how deep?

Gl: First of all, I saw several plans...

GLAZAR 12

Gl: I saw more than one plan...in almost all of them, the tube is drawn in a straight line. That's not correct. The tube was a narrow alleyway... very narrow, on both sides barbed wire, and interwoven with brushwood, so it was very green. You have to imagine that it was like something through which lions were let out into the circus ring.

La: Yes..

Gl: That.. that's how you can visualize it and it was bent in several places, thus the name "tube". And only one person behind another...

La: And why was it like that?

Gl: No, like...(shows him on the table)

La: Yes..

Gl: No..

La: Yes..

Gl: Thus the name "tube"...

La: Yes..

Gl: ...bent like a tube (*or hose*). And only one person after another could proceed. People were also told they should – especially with the transports from the West – hold their documents in their hands... hold... and at the so-called small check-in counter...

La: Check-in counter?

Gl: At the check-in counter... turn them in. That's how people were fooled because everything seemed so proper and organized...

La: But..

Gl: ...to proceed..

La: I think Suchomel was at this counter...

Gl: Not always. It's true that Suchomel was the head of the Gold Jews Detachment..

La: ...the so-called Gold Jews..

Gl: ...the so-called Gold Jews had money, gold and valuables... those were sorted, also the documents. He was the head, but of course, he was not always on duty.

La: He what?

- Gl: He didn't always have the shift.
- La: Yes..
- Gl: There were others too..
- La: Yes..
- Gl: ...among them.
- La: But let's come back to the tube. How long was the...the tube?
- Gl: The tube.. I would estimate.. maybe 30 meters..
- La: 30 meters..
- Gl: 30..
- La: Suchomel said 80.
- Gl: I can't refute that.. maybe not that long.. 100 meters is almost too long.. I would say about 30, maybe 50 meters, but it didn't go in a straight line..
- La: Yes..
- Gl: The straight part was perhaps the 30 meters..
- La: Yes but..
- Gl: But because it was bent, it's possible that it was longer. That's possible.
- La: Yes.. at the end of the tube were the gas chambers.
- Gl: And at the end of the tube were the gas chambers.
- La: And as far as you're concerned.. what did you know? The people, the Jews went into the gas chamber without warning or were they warned?
- Gl: Eh.. as I said, the transports from the West were treated differently... they were deceived about everything, and it was very different with the transports from the East, meaning from Poland and the occupied parts of Russia.
- La: And how do you explain that?
- Gl: Eh.. because with the transports from the East, many of them knew what awaited them..
- La: They knew?
- Gl: They either heard about it or.. they had already witnessed people being shot.. en masse.
- La: Yes..



- Gl: We, who came from the West, didn't go through that. Never... we didn't dream of it. Of course, as soon as the people were in the buildings with the gas chambers, the SS and the Ukrainians treated them very harshly. Then they whipped them in there without differentiating. I wasn't there, I heard this from others that they even threw the children, little children in over the heads of the others.
- La: Only with Jews from the East or with everyone?
- Gl: I don't know because I never worked directly at the gas chambers.

La: I think there was violence.

Gl: Yes, but I heard from others that the moment they were in the building, there was violence. Toward all, no matter who. But that was very late. From... And then, something else. Whenever the SS were nervous or when there was an incident... The order was always, "Undress immediately." The minute you are naked, you are powerless. The naked human being ceases to be a human being. Somehow, he hides his nakedness and... it's strange, every man, every woman stands there with his or her arms crossed. The man down below, the woman has her arms crossed over her breasts. Everyone, everyone without exception. No exception. There was no exception. Always like this. It's an image as if putting the human being on a cross.

La: You saw that?

Gl: Yes.

La: You saw the people, when...

Gl: I saw the people, I saw the people in the undressing station. I can describe another, another incident for you. That was at a later time. A large transport came from Grodno or Bialystok. And at that time, I worked in a barrack that was close to the ramp, one where the better items of clothing were sorted. But when a large transport came, all of us were chased out and we had to help with the processing of

- Gl: the big transport, the whole proceedings, because... if, for example, transports came in 20 degrees Centigrade, half of it was already...
- La: ...already dead!
- Gl: Already dead. Frozen.
- La: In the train car.
- Gl: In the train cars. We had to pull them out and carry them away. And back then, one day we were chased out and formed a small group – I was in the group, I couldn't get out of it anymore, and I thought to myself, now we're going to work in the gas chambers. That was also the fear in Treblinka. It wasn't just death, but it was also the fear in Treblinka, you could be made to do work that was worse.
- La: The death camp?
- Gl: So, you also constantly lived with the fear that you would be sent to work in the gas chambers.
- La: Why did you think that?
- Gl: Because... we were led to the undressing station. And the path from the undressing station then eventually led to the tube, so either to work in the gas chambers, at the gas chambers or to death. To death in the gas chambers. We were chased into the... across the undressing station into the barrack... there was a barrack there. That's where the women gathered, and later the women were... that is,

Gl: the women undressed there and then their hair was shorn in the barrack. And precisely because so many people had arrived, we were chased into the barrack to remove the clothing.

La: Into the barrack where their hair...

Gl: Where the women had to undress. And after that, their hair was shorn. And that's where I saw all the naked women. I still remember it. Someone from the Command Detachment Red came walking past me; they were used to it; they did this every day...

La: Command Detachment Red were the ones who worked in the undressing room?

Gl: Who had to help with the undressing. And he bellowed at me, "Well, Richard, did you..."

Bob. No. 149 (GL 13)

Gl: So, that man yelled into my ear back then, the one from the Reds, "Well now, Richard, are you getting your fill of the dreams from life outside... to see so many, so many naked women at once?" This expression, that way of saying "life on the outside, out there in life" was so common in Treblinka. What did you do in life on the outside? Or: back then, during life on the outside. That was the usual thing in Treblinka.

La: Yes, now, what was (*your*) impression of all these naked women?

Gl: A mass of completely helpless human beings.

- La: But, human beings?
- Gl: Yes, still human being. Crying women, screaming children. Chaos. It was something human, but something that you didn't know about from life outside...
- La: Not...
- Gl: No.
- La: Can you explain it?
- Gl: A... mass which simply no longer distinguished itself into individuals. Simply a mass.
- La: No individuals?
- Gl: No, no individuals... no longer any individuality. Nothing. And always the same scene, always the same scene: arms over the breasts and nothing else. Every woman the same.
- La: Why so?
- Gl: Yes, every woman the same. The old woman just like the young one... yes, somehow, in that moment, the most beautiful young woman becomes old.
- La: The most beautiful woman?
- Gl: The most beautiful woman gets old in the moment.
- La: ...gets old?
- Gl: Yes, she just gets old; everything about her hangs, is loose and simply degraded. Perhaps only the screaming is still human... everything else... it's not a pretty sight.
- La: Why? Because these people were already so half-dead with fatigue?

Gl: In that instant, in that instant, everyone has given up.

La: Given up?

Gl: Just that they were not able to take action, not do anything.

La: And for you, these people were already dead?

Gl: For me, these people were as good as dead.

La: As...?

Gl: As good as dead. You couldn't help these people anymore. Then too, it happened sometimes, but that was on the ramp. A few times it happened that .. on the ramp. We knew that. Later, after the ramp, everything was too late. But on the ramp... one of us suddenly yelled out, "You're all going to your death. Defend yourselves, do something! You're all going to your death." Everyone looked at him as if he were a madman. They all looked down on their hands and their suitcases, looked after their luggage.

La: But someone said that ..on the ramp?

Gl: That happened. But it just got lost in all that chaos.

La: No one heard that?

Gl: No one listened to it. No one. And then we knew, back then already, that you couldn't do anything with the people arriving. Very soon, we thought about organizing something. A revolt. Already as of November '42.

La: So soon?

- Gl: Yes, then already. And in the beginning, in one cargo, that is, loaded train cars full of sorted items, which were to be transported out of Treblinka, two men were hidden. They had the assignment to get in touch with the Polish underground movement and to try to inform them what was going on in Treblinka. I found out much later, after the war, that the information actually reached all the way to the British government. And it was denied, that is, the British government refused to deal with it as if it were something completely absurd and a fantasy.
- La: Yes, yes, I know, but that's a different chapter. I still want to get your opinion of the difference between Polish Jews and the others...
- Gl: For us coming out of the West, the first encounter with the entity of Polish Jews was something completely new, something completely surprising. I have to state here very honestly, everything that happened in Treblinka, happened of course under the SS terror, that is, with the German mentality.
- La: With the German mentality?
- Gl: With the German mentality and we understood this mentality better than the mentality of the Polish Jews. We...
- La: Meaning that the SS mentality was your mentality?
- Gl: Oh yes. If an SS man yelled or said something, even

Gl: bellowed, somehow I was able to figure that out better – the threats or shall we say, the level of threat – than when I heard something from the Polish Jews in my early days..

La: The Polish Jews in Treblinka, the worker Jews.

Gl: Because... it happened later, when various things became clear to me and when no transports were coming, that a piece of soap was something very much in demand. And when I turned around and the soap was gone, I was furious. And then someone explained to me, well, it's really not like that; it's your own fault. You should have watched over your soap better.

La: Yes.

Gl: And only later did I..

La: These Polish Jews stole the soap.

Gl: Yes, but that wasn't anything bad. Only later, very late, at a later point in time, did I comprehend it. These people had the pogroms and persecution and murder and killings – the Polish Jews – as strongly in their consciousness as the weekly Sabbath celebration.

La: Yes, that's very..

Gl: And for them to take something in order to save themselves under these circumstances, that was really not a sin. Because with them, it was always about survival.

Bob. No. 150 (GL 14)

La: Did you feel any common... commonality with these Polish Jews; they were Polish Jews?

Gl: Yes, of course, but..



- La: Or they were your people?
- Gl: They were, they were Jews and they were in Treblinka. But in the beginning they were a foreign entity to me.
- La: Did you hate the Jews?
- Gl: I have to admit that there were times where I.. where I, not only I, but we, the Czech group, hated them, because they were undisciplined and they were not capable of an organized resistance.
- La: You mean, the Jews, the Polish Jews, the worker Jews weren't? There were Jews who arrived and were sent immediately to the gas chambers.
- Gl: No, rather the Jews who were in Treblinka with us.
- La: Because they were incapable of an organized resistance.
- Gl: Yes, maybe. For us, there was something, there was something foreign and it (*confused?*) us.. I don't want to say that we were really angry with them, but it simply surprised us. In the morning after.. after another day of mass murder, we awoke in the barrack where we were sleeping, a stench everywhere, vomit with, with, with urine, etc. And there stands someone, lays out the tefillin (*phylacteries or amulets*), lays out the straps, the prayer straps and prays.
- La: A Polish Jew?
- Gl: A Polish Jew. I let someone translate for me. "You watched over me, Almighty, last night. You gave to me, so I could see the light of the next day. Your name be

- Gl: praised.
- La: What did you think? Personally, I find it very beautiful.
- Gl: I.. I don't want to say, I, I, that it turned me off in some way, but for me it was so strange, so unnatural..
- La: Did it repel you?
- Gl: It was unnatural for me under these circumstances. In Treblinka.. that didn't fit into Treblinka.
- La: Were there many people...many Polish Jews.. who prayed?
- Gl: There weren't many like that; no, there weren't many. They were exceptions. There were many who.. who stopped praying. There was another incident during the time when there were no transports and I saw Jelo (*Jelomir*) in our group.
- La: Jelo Bloch?
- Gl: Jelo Bloch had a.. he was a foreman at the time, so he had a whip. I saw how he chased a Polish boy who worked with us behind the barrack and whipped him.
- La: Why?
- Gl: Because he (*took*) from someone on the transport, who still.. that is, on the way from the ramp to the undressing station, he dared to grab from him a package with food. He was looking for food.

La: It was food?

Gl: Yes, yes. And another one, a Polish Jew by the name of David Pratt, who worked with us and who taught me a lot about everything – he explained it to me and Jelo Bloch. He said, “You know, I don’t know if it’s true about that one, but take a look at the other one over there, the young 17-year old, who’s working there – I still feel for him from life on the outside. He has never, never in his short life, in life on the outside, had enough to eat. Never as much as here in Treblinka. But not because the family was so poor, no; his father saved everything he earned, all his money and exchanged it for dollars with the only, the only purpose of having enough dollars to be able to emigrate to America.”

La: With good reason!

Gl: And that’s how I slowly...and with such examples and incidents, came to understand the mentality of the Polish Jews. And later I understood how the Polish Jews were for those who had already emigrated, that is, in quotation marks, “the rich Jews” in America: garbage. (*Jews who lived in America saw Polish Jews as “garbage”.*) Or shall we say, how Jews who lived on, on, on the periphery of the Jewish diaspora.

La: You yourself lived on the periphery of the Jewish diaspora.

Gl: I will never forget some of them as long as I live.

Gl: I will never forget David Pratt. I will never forget Samuel Riesmann, who is still alive, who saved himself, and many others.

La: Yes, but . . . when these transports of political Jews and Jews from White Russia, Grodno, etc. came, I think, they were very poor?

Gl: The people were very poor.

La: They came from months and years of hunger, persecution, etc.

Gl: You have to see it this way: A transport came from Theresienstadt, and lying around everywhere were suitcases, backpacks, all kinds of luggage, everything under the sun. And a transport came from Grodno and Bialystok, and in that transport of 5000 people there was not a single suitcase. There were only bound-up sacks; those were only lice-infested clothes, but if you were to open the lice-infested coat, the lined coat, in this lice-infested coat might be one dollar bill upon another sewn in. America, the only salvation: Amerika!

La: Meaning, that they, they had saved?

Gl: They starved and saved themselves to death, to death, just to have the money for the trip to America.

La: Yes, but that means that for these people money was the only salvation. Yes, that's amazing.

La: *(no video)* It was your job to open their clothes?

Gl: Our assignment was... I worked for a time in the one of the barracks. Out of this barrack, the SS made a sort of department store, or a warehouse. The departments were called boxes: men's coats - type A, men's coats – type B, women's coats, brassieres, etc., etc. Just as in a department store. And that's where I worked and had to sort the things, but check them first to see if there was money, gold and valuables sewn in somewhere. You had to feel, touch every coat through and through.

La: And there was money?

Gl: Yes. But I have to say that *(video resumes)* I was never able to search as well as the Polish Jews.

La: You never could do it as well...?

Gl: I was never able to search as well as the Polish Jews/

Bob. No. 151 (GL 15)

Gl: And then I also learned to comprehend that these people *(acted)* out of fear of a pogrom, out of terror and of death, and it should be noted, not of an ordinary death, but for them it was always a torturous death, outside of Treblinka and of course, in Treblinka – no ordinary death, always a torturous death. These people developed a mentality of – I'll say it in Yiddish – “*eppes Kleines in die Tasch n'ein*”. Some little thing into the pocket; it goes into the pocket, something

Gl: valuable that you can take with you. So, no house, no property, rather money, gold, valuables. Something which can ultimately save your life, something you can take with you. Something that can easily be moved. And that's how they came to Treblinka in the end. And that's how wealth accumulated in Treblinka, which anyone who hasn't been there can ever, ever even imagine. And these riches, this mammoth wealth in Treblinka then corrupted everyone. All the SS people, the Ukrainian guards, that is, how shall I say it, the foreign masters and the local servants. And they all did or allowed things to happen only to maintain Treblinka and that Treblinka (*remain*) as the valuable end product of money, gold, jewelry. And that was the main product (*emerging from this*)? The chief product was sand mixed with ashes. Nothing. Nothing else as a main product, and as a byproduct: money, gold, jewelry.

La: And, and the SS, did they know exactly that the people, the Polish Jews, would arrive with dollars and jewelry?

Gl: They must have known that. Of course. Besides, everyone whom you would deport these days, you would say to him, you can take only 50 kilos with you. In all certainty, he would take along the most valuable things. Everyone would do that.

La: Yes. And in front of the gas chambers everything was stolen?

Gl: What was also devastating for me, and what became partly

- Gl: clear through this is the mentality of the Polish Jews; it was the irrational anti-Semitism in Poland. And it was for me and all of us who came from the West, something unbelievable and in...in...inexplicable. We were told incidents of Jews being hidden, and at midnight, having their last money that they had on them taken, and then the person went out and denounced them at midnight, and then got the reward for that as well.
- La: Yes, but, yes, this impression is so deep in Poland, for instance in Treblinka; all the Poles who lived in Treblinka, knew everything, saw everything..
- Gl: The ones who lived around Treblinka.
- La: Yes, everything. The farmers worked their land..
- Gl: Maybe it can be put this way, as far as my experiences go: Poland is a land of extremes. Either a Pole betrayed a Jew and even collected money for it or he barricaded himself in his house with him, in his farmhouse and was burned to death with him in that house. There were cases like that.
- La: Those were exceptions.
- Gl: Those were exceptions, but there were cases like that. I heard about them. I remember – I've already mentioned the name, David Pratt, when he taught us, Karl and me; he was older and we were sort of, maybe not his sons but his younger brothers. He told us:

- Gl: “Karl and Richard, if ever, by some miracle, you should manage to flee and if you get out, you must never, never say on the outside that you are Jews. They would kill you, would slaughter you and, to top it off, eviscerate you to see if you had gold and jewelry in your stomach.”
- La: Yes, but you heard about this generalized corruption. The Poles were also corrupt.
- Gl: The whole area, everywhere, all around, was corrupt.
- La: Can you give an example?
- Gl: I heard from the others that around Treblinka the villages were poor.
- La: You got ..
- Gl: On the farms Wolka, Kotaski ..
- La: Prostin ..
- Gl: Prostin, Kossov... Kossov was a bit farther ..
- La: Treblinka was too.
- Gl: Mainly Treblinka, Kotaski, Wolka. The shacks of these poor people were full of gold rings, jewelry and money. But the biggest speculators, as far as I know, were sitting in Warsaw. And when they... of course, there were whores all around ..
- La: Ah so, whores, Polish whores.
- Gl: Yes, yes, Polish whores available to the SS and mainly the Ukrainian guards. And they in turn took the money the money,



- Gl: but ..
- La: And they lived in these villages?
- Gl: As I understood it, those in the villages had to pass the money along. Otherwise, they would have been turned in.
- La: Gangsterism?
- Gl: Yes, and if not, then they would spread the word that they were partisans, and they got rid of them. So, it was a kind of Wild West or the like. Something like that.
- La: It was so surprising how the farmers in Treblinka...the farmers in these villages tilled their land while there was destruction, destruction the whole time..
- Gl: And even sent their children, sent their children to the edge of the camp, even though it was so dangerous, with packages of food. The Ukrainians bought that and then the Ukrainian guards sold it down the line till it reached us. And in this way, a whole economy developed in Treblinka. A whole economy with prices.

Bob. No. 152 (GL 16)

- La: The corruption. Were the Jewish workers corrupted? I don't know... it's a question.
- Gl: They too.
- La: They too?
- Gl: Everyone was corrupted.
- La: Can you (*describe*) the whole process..

- Gl: ...the whole process with the money and gold and valuables. Everyone, without exception, had something hidden away for the worst case scenario. If someone

were to be deported today, he would certainly hide something valuable for the worst case scenario. I personally had 1000 marks sewn into my wool cap. And that was very little – I was alone. I know of cases where gold and valuables were hidden in the children's toys. And so, in the early period, 15,000 people arrived in Treblinka on a daily basis. You have to imagine – 15,000 people. And each one, even if he hadn't hidden anything, brought, or most of them, a gold ring, gold teeth. Gold teeth in their mouths. And that stayed somewhere in Treblinka, among all the things. And those things were searched for. And the SS organized that. First, the little people were told at the check-in counter, they have to hand over their documents...

La: Before the tube?

Gl: Before the tube, with their money, that they would get it back with their documents.  
That was...

La: The so-called bath.

Gl: That was, that was the first transit station.

La: People gave of their own free will?

Gl: People handed them over because they believed it and they didn't have a choice.  
Also, they thought perhaps, for example, the people from the West transports

- Gl: thought, well, it's better to hand it over like this than to leave it in the pockets of the clothing (*in the undressing room*).
- La: Yes, that's true.
- Gl: That's how it was. That was the first part. Something stayed in the pockets. And the rest, that was hidden somewhere in the things. And the SS organized whole detachments, and I belonged for several months to such a detachment . .
- La: The Sorting Detachment.
- Gl: To this Sorting Detachment. We had to look through every piece of clothing, sort through, feel through, even cut it open, and to sort the money and gold . .
- La: Cut it open with what?
- Gl: In the barrack, they had put up little boxes, sort of a, a, a letter. . . a little box, like a mailbox, and into these mailboxes we had to deposit, to put in the money and gold and valuables.
- La: They were mailboxes, a mailbox for dollars, a mailbox for rubles, a mailbox for. .
- Gl: No, everything together. Everything together. The barrack in which I worked, there were six such little boxes. Twice in the morning, twice in the afternoon the Gold Jews would come, the ones from the Gold Jews Detachment, that was a special detachment. Usually that was for people who were professional jewelers. . .
- La: Jewelers?

Gl: Jewelers or such people were sought out, or those who had worked with money, had worked at a bank, and they were assigned to this detachment. For, by and by, not only Polish zloty came in and American dollars and Czech kronen and German marks, but later money from the Balkan countries came in.

La: From Greece, Bulgaria ..

Gl: From Greece, from Bulgaria, from Yugoslavia, etc.

La: And Suchomel .. he was the head of it?

Gl: The head of this detachment of Gold Jews was Suchomel ..

La: He was, it was a position of trust?

Gl: So, four time, four times .. Yes, he had a trusted position. Four times a day the Gold Jews came and emptied these little boxes. In the beginning, there was a lot in them, but later not.

La: Why?

Gl: As time went on, there began to be in the whole camp a – I would call it, an implicit consensus, a tacit consensus.

La: Aha!

Gl: And everyone profited from that – the SS men, they didn't really want ... at least not the heads of it – they didn't want so much order nor so much supervision, because they wanted something for themselves. And in time, a certain degree of disarray was tolerated, simply so they could fish in murky waters. And that's how a lot of money and gold was siphoned off and it

Gl: actually went from us by way to the Ukrainians to the SS.

- La: And, for example, you buried, hid the money?
- Gl: I remember, with Karl and David Pratt, we buried perhaps more than 100,000, maybe more than that, worth of dollars.
- La: Buried it?
- Gl: Buried it.
- La: Where?
- Gl: We never dug it up. In the barrack where we worked.
- La: In the sand?
- Gl: Yes. Everything imaginable – gold cutlery, gold watches. There were gold 20 dollar coins in Treblinka, the so-called “golden eagle”. There were golden Louis d’ors in Treblinka.
- La: Louis d’or?
- Gl: The transports from, from the Balkan countries, from Bulgaria, Greece brought those. There were golden rubles, there was jewelry, jewelry that is hard to visualize. I now think that there must have been jewelry even from Spain.
- La: From Spain?
- Gl: After... yes, after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, that is, if I remember correctly, the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, about 1490 or so. Isabelle of Castile, during that time. They were splendid pieces. Well, and then it happened..
- La: What a trip!

Gl: And it would happen that an SS man came along who said, “What did you find there?” We knew that already. We had played that game already. We put it aside, didn’t put it into the little box right away.

Bob. No. 153 (GL 17)

La: The SS knew exactly that they, I mean the Jews, the worker Jews took money...

Gl: They had to know it. It was standard in Treblinka that everything was permissible and nothing was permissible. You could take what you wanted; just don’t get caught. To have money and gold was forbidden, of course. There was only one punishment for that – death. Death in the hospital. The hospital was a shooting gallery.

La: With a shot in the neck.

Gl: Yes, yes. A shooting gallery with a red cross, the emblem of the Red Cross. Despite that, almost everyone collected money and gold. Be it for the possibility of fleeing, be it something to give to the Kapo, to dissuade the Kapo from perhaps suggesting that you work in the gas chambers. And then you collected money and gold for the revolt – the Gold Jews did that too. The Gold Jews themselves were responsible for a lot of money and gold disappearing. And it happened... that was the well-known incident with Dr. Koronschewski, in whose possession Second Lieutenant Franz found money, and that money was already meant for the preparation of the revolt.

- La: What did this Dr. Koronschewski do?
- Gl: There was a fight, and in this fight, Dr. Koronschewski got the worst of it, and he was killed in a most gruesome way.
- La: Just how did it happen?
- Gl: Koronschewski worked as a dentist. As a dentist he was supposed to work for the SS.
- La: For the SS?
- Gl: For the SS and the Ukrainians. And when one day, Kurt Franz, one of the worst, came to him in the recuperation room or the treatment room, he noticed that Koronschewski's bag was too full. Probably, he had gotten the money from the Gold Jews just before that.
- La: Koronschewski was one of the organizers of..
- Gl: And Koronschewski was involved in the preparation of the revolt at that time. The problem was to get weapons. And one idea was, since the Ukrainians could be bought, to buy something from the Ukrainians, the Ukrainian guards, mainly small arms..
- La: Pistols
- Gl: Pistols. And when Franz told Koronschewski to show him his bag, the contents of his bag, Koronschewski flew at him with a knife, a scalpel, and he managed somehow to shut the door and call for help, and they actually beat him to death. Then Koronschewski was... , then they called a special roll call; we were all called out and there was

Gl: a special roll call, and the on the ground lay Koronschewski practically dead, and he wanted to get out of him who the accomplices were. But Kurt Franz didn't get that; after a few blows, Koronschewski, you could see it.. his whole body just collapsed. Despite that, afterwards, Kurt Franz had the whole detachment of Gold Jews come and he interrogated them, directly at the hospital, over a trench, with a pistol at the.. every one of them at the nape of the neck, at the neck.

La: They were all killed?

Gl: No. None of them. No one said a word.

La: Yes, yes. It was a..

Gl: And finally Franz let them all go. They all had had to undress. Naked, naked they all stood at the so-called death trench. That's how Franz interrogated them. And then he let them all go. We suspected back then that something was at odds among the SS. That probably Stangl, the..

La: The Commandant.

Gl: The Commandant (*no video*) didn't want more murders, but not on humanitarian grounds, rather, he was supposed to have forbidden the killing of people, who already knew their jobs, without good reason.

Cassette No. 13 – Side B

Bob. No. 154 (GL 18)

Gl: (*video resumes*) We suspected back then when Franz let the Gold Jews go, that he didn't want to go against an order from Commandant Stangl. Probably – I mean, not on humanitarian



- Gl: grounds – Stangl had forbidden killing people, who already knew their jobs, without good reason.
- La: Yes, but did the SS take money for themselves?
- Gl: They took money for themselves. I know of a case where an SS man was transferred. He never showed his face in Treblinka again. I remember that it was Corporal Lehmann, and before he left, he went from one little box to another and took everything, all the money.
- La: It was forbidden to...
- Gl: Of course. It had to be forbidden for him just as it was for everyone else. But he did – I saw him. He did it.
- La: Did a man like Suchomel steal money? As head of the Gold Jews?
- Gl: The question is whether one can call it stealing, for, as two of the Gold Jews told me, they were Czechs too, they came from Maehrisch-Ostrau, from Moravia, from Maehrisch-Ostrau, Saul Sauer and Willi Fürst. It was probably like this: Suchomel says, “Now I need so and so much paper money from you”, and with that the deed was done. For what purpose, how he did it, for what he used it, no one knows. After a while, courier came from Lublin regularly once a month or twice a month, and he had to take the sorted money and the valuables to Lublin from the so-called big till, that was the so-called big till.

- Gl: that's where the Gold Jews worked, that was some distance away from the death operations, all of it with him. But that was a small part, and it's hard to estimate, but maybe it didn't even amount to, wasn't even 20%, maybe not even 10%.
- La: Yes, but after the destruction of the camp, after the revolt and the destruction?
- Gl: Everything was destroyed, but I found out after the war that at first, the Germans dug up the whole area, dug deep and searched for valuables. And later, after the war, even in 1957 when I went to Warsaw for business reasons and was able to drive to Treblinka, I was told, even then people came at night and dug in Treblinka, like the gold diggers at the time of the Wild West.
- La: Poles?
- Gl: Poles.
- La: Polish people.
- Gl: Polish people.
- La: I know that it's true. The villages around Treblinka are no longer poor villages today.
- Gl: There were cases... One of us, a Jew, was somehow, had a good connection with a Ukrainian guard. And right away, a method was devised – we gave the money to the Jew, he gave it to the Ukrainian. He

Gl: always brought the Jews food, even vodka. Vodka was the only, the only, the only, the only alcohol in Treblinka. And that's how it worked. We looked for money, gave it to one person and he passed it on to the Ukrainian. Groups were always forming on the basis of trust to one another. That's how it went. And then a whole economy developed and, for example, 50 grams of sausage and a roll, a bun, and a bottle of vodka cost 50 dollars in Treblinka.

La: Now, could you talk about the fact that your lives were dependent on the arrival of transports; without transports your lives were in jeopardy.

Gl: Our lives were only partly dependent on the arrival of transports. You can't say that our lives were fully dependent on the trans... transports. You have to see it in another light. The existence of the SS men and the good life of the SS men with all the valuables and also with, that they, if they went on leave, they always took a, a, a, a Persian (*fur*) coat with them for their women, their wives, they always, always, they always went on leave with full suitcases, and they frequently went on leave. They took turns. The existence of the SS was dependent on the existence of Treblinka, and that's where...

La: Could you...

Gl: Because even when later no... for a long time, no transports came...

- La: When, when was it?
- Gl: The so-called “lull”, as it was called, came in February ‘43, after the big transports from Grodno and Bialystok. And then it was quiet.
- La: Quiet, no more transports.
- Gl: Already as of January, as of January already, February to March, it was quiet. Nothing. And since we were already skilled at our jobs and capable of liquidating in short order... there was nothing.
- La: Nothing at all, no clothing and ..
- Gl: At that time, nothing, nothing, nothing at all. The whole camp was empty. One day small train wagons arrived, with .. per train, small wagons, so-called lorries, which were installed at the sorting area, and the whole sorting area had an incline, and so they started to level it out, that is, simply to transport sand from one side with the little wagons, the lorries, to the other side and to make the big sorting area level. So that’s how the SS figured out a way to continue the work. And meanwhile...
- La: And the death camp, the gas chambers were not in use?
- Gl: They were not in use; they stood quiet, and amid all this, suddenly, where there was already hunger everywhere...
- La: Hunger?
- Gl: Hunger, hunger, we were hungry. There was nothing to eat, only the soup from the kitchen. 300 grams of bread per day and a bowl of soup. That was it. And at the time of the most severe hunger, suddenly came the transports from the Balkan countries in the second

Gl: half of March.

La: Yes, and . .

Gl: And then it happened – it was fantastic – suddenly the camp was full of food, with possessions again. Everyone stuffed his face, despite that being forbidden. One detachment carried off a box full of marmalade.

Bob. No. 156 (GL 21)

Gl: I remember in the first half of January '43, big transports from Grodno and Bialystok coming in during a cold period of minus 20 degrees; everything was white. Ice everywhere, frost everywhere, cold. Even the doors of the cars had to be opened with a hammer. And then the people were (*chased*) to the undressing station. They had to undress there and (*go*) through the tube in the cold.

La: Completely naked?

Gl: Naked. But it went fast, faster than usual.

La: Why faster? The SS were cold . .

Gl: The people were cold. And then, from that time on, no more transports arrived.

La: These transports were the last?

Gl: Those were the last. Then everything was packed up. Then empty train cars arrived. Those were loaded up with the packed things, and suddenly, the whole camp stood there empty. There was nothing, nor anything to eat.

La: And the gas chambers?

Gl: Then came widespread hunger. The gas chambers stood quiet. But other people were incinerated. (*They were*) dug up from the early period

Gl: dug up and incinerated. (*Our*) hunger got worse and got so bad that if someone (*moved*) his mouth, moved it a bit, he was suspected of having found something to eat somewhere and not sharing it with the other person. And we... we witnessed it... the SS came up with all kinds of work. They had little wagons come, the so-called lorries, and with these, the sorting area had to be leveled. And my detachment in the barrack, it was completely empty and there wasn't a single item of clothing in it. We had to level out the whole barrack and cover, stamp the cinders, black cinders. And as we, as I was stamping with, with, with the others, suddenly entered the Corporal, back then, he was still the Corporal, Staff Sergeant, Staff Sergeant, Kurt Franz and stopped right in front of us. Suddenly he hopped a bit and said to us, "As of tomorrow, the transports will be rolling in again." And he left. We didn't say anything, just looked at each other. Everyone of us thought, "So, as of tomorrow, we will no longer be hungry."

La: You thought only of that or...?

Gl: David Pratt, David Pratt said to me, "Richard, what do you think? If you're thinking the same that I'm thinking, then it's that as of tomorrow we won't be hungry anymore."

La: There was only the question of hunger? There was no, no question about life?

- Gl: I would say, it was more an issue of hunger, initially. The hunger issue.
- La: But now a question. Without transports. . .
- Gl: No, for one reason – at that time we were fully occupied with preparations for the revolt. That is, we wanted to survive till the revolt.
- La: Yes, but without transports, wasn't your life in jeopardy?
- Gl: And without transports, for sure, the whole thing was in jeopardy.
- La: Because you are, weren't needed. . .
- Gl: Then the transports from the Balkan countries arrived; that was about 24,000 people. In one week, it was all over.
- La: 24,000 people.
- Gl: 24,000 people, and it took no longer than a week, maybe a few days more.
- La: From which country?
- Gl: The transports came from a collection camp in Salonika. That's where Jews from Macedonia, Bulgaria, from Yugoslavia were held.
- La: Yes, Macedonia.
- Gl: From these transports, three people were taken out. We just couldn't understand, understand, communicate anything with them. They didn't speak a word of German.
- La: Three people out of 24,000.
- Gl: Three people out of 24,000. Not really young people. Two apparently had been teachers, and even a rabbi.

- Gl: And they lived till the revolt, but they lived very, very, somehow just among themselves and knew nothing about it.
- La: And how were these people from Salonika ... poor people? Were they...
- Gl: Those were rich people and the transports brought a lot.
- La: How were these people, the women, the men?
- Gl: Everything you can imagine. They were... and this was shocking for us, because these people were built very differently; they were marvelous people, all, all of them beautiful people.
- La: The women..?
- Gl: Men, women, children, all of them.
- La: Strong?
- Gl: Very strong, well-built ... and completely without a clue, completely without a clue.
- La: Without a clue!
- Gl: I remember that we weren't allowed to come out of the barrack; we weren't allowed into the area, not at all.
- La: Why not?
- Gl: Well, because... These people had been given the line that this is a business operation, there will be work and first they'll go into a disinfection shower, and I remember, the train wagons, the lorries, were standing at the sorting station at the time and that's what fooled them; it gave the impression there was work and building going on here. I remember



Gl: Technical Sergeant Küttner was walking along in front of the people showing them where they should put their luggage and everything, so it was already presorted a bit. Then they all disappeared into the tube and into the gas chambers.

La: One week.

Gl: And then something happened that was terrible, surely for the others, as it was for me – a feeling of helplessness, of powerlessness, a feeling of disgrace, of shame and disgrace.

La: Why disgrace?

Gl: Because we rushed at their possessions. One detachment carried off a case full of cookies, one a case of marmalade. The boxes were intentionally dropped on the ground, one man stumbling over another, so that he would fall onto the cookies and marmalade with his mouth. That's how we stuffed our faces. The SS saw that and whipped people, whipped us. Well, and that's how the blood got mixed in with the red marmalade. That's how it looked.

La: So. Hunger was your...

Bob. No. 157 (GL 21 – second)

Gl: The transports gave us a terrible realization. Suddenly we saw that we were actually doing everything on our own, without the SS having to force us with their whips. We were so used to it that we were really an integrated part of the whole killing machinery.

- Gl: And actually we were just waiting for the next transports. And then we did all the work for which we had been so well trained. The work of Treblinka, the whole killing machinery was, is, shall we say, became our job, our handiwork. *(no video)* We were the factory workers in Treblinka. And we were dependent on the whole factory process, that is, the killing process of Treblinka.
- La: But this *(no video or audio, transcript only)* realization came suddenly with the arrival of the new transports?
- Gl: It may not have come so suddenly. But only with the Balkan transports, they showed us so clearly, so starkly why 24,000 people, with perhaps not a sick person among them, not one invalid – they were healthy, well-built people; I remember when we were watching from the barrack, when they were running around naked with their possessions, David said . .
- La: David Pratt?
- Gl: David said, “Maccabees. Maccabees came to Treblinka today.”
- La: Yes, what were they?
- Gl: Well-built, physically strong people in contrast to the . .
- La: Ah, Maccabees; those are warriors!

- Gl: Yes, they could have been warriors.
- La: *(video and audio resume)* Like the Maccabees of yore?
- Gl: Like the Maccabees of yore. And these, these people... after these 24,000 or maybe there were a few less or more... after ten days, there was nothing left of them. So, the machinery was working back then. That's how well-trained we were. Killed people into the gas chambers, pulled them out, incinerated them, sorted their things and packed them up. I want to add here that the whole camp was as if in a frenzy...
- La: Frenzy?
- Gl: With this transport, because these transports always brought with them so many different valuable things, and everyone wanted to profit from them in some way – from the SS to the Jews. I remember one scene. Sergeant Genz picked out two leather suitcases for himself during this chaos and ordered one of us, one of us, to carry the suitcases out. Suddenly Sergeant Genz saw the Technical Sergeant Küttner. Then he chased the man with the suitcases, the Jew, one of us, around the barrack with the whip until Technical Sergeant Küttner was gone. Then he took the two suitcases from him. He packed the suitcases full of liquor from the transport. The cigarettes, that were in there, he gave to the Jew and took off with the two leather suitcases. Incidents like that were common in Treblinka.

- La: Yes, and this, this self-realization was a... that you had become skilled, as you say.
- Gl: A feeling of terrible shame and disgrace.
- La: But was it a surprise?
- Gl: It didn't come all at once. We were aware of it before, but these transports just showed us so clear... so clearly, because with these transports, as never before, everything went so smoothly and quickly. Never like that before.
- La: Yes, and among us (*Lanzmann uses wrong pronoun*), among yourselves, did you speak about...
- Gl: Of course, we spoke of it, and someone said that we've sunk so low, that we've become the henchman's assistants.
- La: Yes, but that was nothing new. You were that already.
- Gl: Yes, we were that right from the beginning. But not to that extent and not with that intensity.
- La: Yes, what did you, what did you think then? What were your feelings at the time?
- Gl: The feelings... it was shame, disgrace and a feeling that something has to happen, we have to organize a revolt. We have to... it can't be just a small operation; it has to be an initiative of the collective workforce. It has to be an initiative by all.
- La: Yes. The idea to carry out a revolt, that was very clear in this case.
- Gl: At this moment... the, the idea was almost realized

Gl: in November '42. It's just that we were always hampered in our preparations by the SS, who always sensed something and transferred people, simply switched the detachments, etc., and of course, that hindered the whole organization. *(no video or audio)* There was a plan, for instance, already in January '43, called "Hour", "The Hour". Everywhere at a certain hour, we were to attack the SS wherever they were, attack them, take their weapons and storm the Commandant's headquarters. That never happened, even when the whole camp was empty later and typhus had already broken out. *(video and audio resume)*

La: Yes, but I think, that during this time when the whole camp was empty and when there were no transports...

Bob. No. 158 (GL 23)

Gl: It was like this. We were actually better able to organize ourselves and the revolt only in the period, and it was a later period, when they didn't exchange us so much, that is, shot some people, got new people from a transport and so constantly mixed up the slaves with the slaves. *(no video)* Around November '42, we noticed that they were "going easy on us" in quotation marks. And that's when we noticed, and we heard too, that Stangl had decided that it's better to have workers who already know their jobs.

La: Specialists.

Gl: Specialists. Specialists for the various jobs

- Gl: be it sorting, be it carrying corpses, be it cutting the women's hair, etc.
- La: But people who already knew their jobs.
- Gl: And precisely that later gave us the chance for preparation, for organizing the revolt.
- La: *(video resumes)* What did Stangl do, what did the SS do during this standstill, during this period when the camp was empty and nothing was going on?
- Gl: During the period between the transports from Grodno and Bialystok, and the transports from the Balkan countries?
- La: How many months was this period?
- Gl: That was about the middle of January '43, to the second half of March '43.
- La: That was two months.
- Gl: That was two months. Mainly, everything that was still there was sorted, packed, loaded and sent off until the whole camp was really empty. Then the sorting station was leveled and they started construction and expansion work everywhere. But in the meantime, there was an epidemic of typhus and during that time, about from the end of January actually to the end of May, until May, the whole camp was infected with typhus. . . well, half, at least half of the camp was infected with typhus.
- La: They didn't kill the sick people?

Gl: It was done as follows, for there were no replacements in that time . . . from January to March there was no addition of new people. So they tried to save us.

La: Aha.

Gl: They set up a so-called recuperation room. That was a . . . a little living room in a barrack, in one where, where, where we had slept, but you could only fit sixteen to twenty people in it. And when they were sick, were in pain or had a high fever from the typhus, they were allowed to go to Dr. Rübbaek – he was one of us, a doctor, who had been taken out of a transport too. And every day (*Corporal*) Mieter came into the recuperation room and asked about the condition of the sick people. And if one of them had it really bad . . . (*Long pause as boat passes by.*)

(GL 24)

Gl: So, if it was really bad for one of the people in the recuperation room, then Mieter sent him to the hospital.

La: Meaning . . .

Gl: Meaning a shot in the neck. That was a camouflaged shooting station and then this Dr. Rübbaek had to give him an injection. He was carried out on a stretcher and then he was shot because of Mieter. But Dr. Rübbaek also gave injections which we had found in the transports, for instance, coramin injections. And the, the sick person didn't know, just what kind of a injection it was. And so,

Gl: when Dr. Rübbaek approached a sick man with a needle, there was always a fight, because the sick person thought it was the hospital injection. And those are the kind of scenes that got played out in the recuperation room; I witnessed them, as I was there myself of a time with typhus. So, for them no poems about the Inferno, as fantasy would have it . .

After the liquidation of the transports from the Balkan countries – that was the end of March, beginning of April – there was another period during which the whole camp was empty. Yet again. And that's when they started construction and expansion work on a big scale. And that's when we said to ourselves, now either the SS in Treblinka want to show their superiors that Treblinka needs to continue to exist – they wanted to justify the existence of Treblinka – or this was really mandated from the highest level, in which case Treblinka was probably meant to serve its initial purpose, meaning, and that was our fear . .

La: But, what, what did you think, that there were no more Jews to kill?

Gl: At that time, we actually thought that there were no more Jews left in Europe to destroy.

La: Did you think that all the European Jews had already been killed in Treblinka?

Gl: No, not that. But we suspected that there were other camps besides Treblinka. But that was just a supposition. I . .

La: You didn't know about . .



- Gl: I knew nothing about Auschwitz, but we knew of Belzec, Sobibor, Trawniki. That we knew, that sort of trickled down to us. It was like this. Treblinka was small in scope. It was an area of a quarter of a kilometer. It's just that its capacity was so terrible.
- La: It was very small?
- Gl: It was that small. And if you calculate that the maximum capacity at Treblinka was 18,000 people per day...

Bob. No. 159 (GL 25 at the end and GL 26)

- Gl: Treblinka was only 500 meters long and in width about 300 meters.
- La: That's it?
- Gl: That's it. If it weren't for the fences, you could have seen the whole camp from the middle of it.
- La: Yes, but there were fences.
- Gl: Today I know one thing...
- La: But you, for instance, back then when you were in Treblinka, did you have perspective of the small size of Treblinka? Or was it...
- Gl: No, no, because I had no basis for comparison. Back then, I thought the whole camp seemed big, or I just had no other image. While still in Treblinka, when I heard about Sobibor, Belzec, I thought they were camps the size of Treblinka. (*I had*) no other image.

- Gl: But today I know one thing, that the bottleneck for the full capacity functioning of Treblinka of 15-18,000 people per day, that was not because of the Treblinka, but outside of Treblinka on the way there.
- La: Transport.
- Gl: The problem was the problem of the transports. Had they been able regularly to bring the 15,000 deported people to Treblinka in accordance with its capacity, then Treblinka by itself – you can figure it out – could have swallowed up the six million Jews who were killed in World War II, in that time, in the duration of war.
- La: Yes, but that's interesting. I (*spoke with*) Filip Müller who was in Auschwitz, the Auschwitz gas chambers, the crematoria, and lives today in Mannheim, and he told me with a kind of pride, "In our gas chambers in Auschwitz, Crematorium 2, we could have (*killed*) a whole city like Mannheim in a few weeks, we could have burned them up..."
- Gl: Yes, that was the case in Treblinka too. That was possible in Treblinka too; the estimates are about 800,000 people, a city maybe the size of Bochum or any of the German cities, a city anywhere in the world, that would be completely erased, completely liquidated. With old people, with children, with all of them, whether they were sick or not.

Gl: With all of them.

La: Yes, if the camp was so small, there's something I can't envision or understand: Why did they always make such a radical distinction between a lower camp and an upper camp, between a Jewish worker camp and an extermination camp, since they were so closely aligned.

Gl: I didn't understand that so fully myself, even back then, and I don't understand it even today. But I think somehow it was inherent in the system, inherent in the system. The whole system, the levels, the levels of fear, the levels of terrible things, always at certain levels. Maybe they still wanted to camouflage something, that people were killed in an assembly line fashion. Of course, we all knew exactly what was going on. I think ..

La: Between your barrack, where you lived and the gas chambers, how far was it?

Gl: It was a distance of 100 meters.

La: 100 meters.

Gl: No more.

La: No more?

Gl: No, definitely not more.

La: And you always mention the extermination camp...

Gl: Today I believe one thing. All that had, of course, to be planned in advance. And while they were planning all that, while the projects were being worked out, drafting everything,

- Gl: maybe they were already determining, that there should be two sections – one section should be an arrival camp, where people get undressed – the other part was to be the actual death... the actual killing camp, and these two camps were to be separated from one another in such a way that only very few witnesses see the actual murders. That's how I see it. Probably they wanted very few...
- La: Yes, I wanted to...
- Gl: ...witnesses to the immediate deaths, the immediate murders. That's my explanation.
- La: The SS who were in the death camp, the SS were only in the death camp, they never came to...
- Gl: There were certain SS who only in the, who worked only in the so-called death camp, and there were certain SS, who worked only in the first section of the camp, as for example Suchomel. Suchomel worked in the first section of the camp. Kötzing, Sergeant Kötzing, Staff Sergeant Ludwig, Staff Sergeant Mattes, I think he was a ... I don't know exactly; they worked in the second section of the camp.
- La: But they never rotated?
- Gl: They never rotated, but they did, they did come to us in Camp 1, in the first section, too. All of them. They also all lived in one barrack, in an SS barrack. But certain SS had only certain assignments. In section 1 and separated in section 2.

La: There were only 100 meters between your barrack and the gas chamber. That's incredible.

Cassette 14 – Side A

Bob. No. 160 (GL 27)

Gl: There were a number of cases in Treblinka, which touched me very deeply, but there was one which almost drove me mad.

La: Mad?

Gl: It was not a dramatic case. It was the end of November '42 (*no video and audio*) and when they chased us from our work down to the residence barrack, suddenly there were flames leaping out from behind the raised berm of the death camp and in the blink of an eye, the whole area, the whole camp looked as if it was on fire.

La: It was night?

Gl: It was dark already and we came into the barrack, ate and .. through the window, through the small window we saw the fantastic fire in all colors of the rainbow – red, yellow, green, violet – and suddenly someone was standing on the platform, whom we knew to be an opera singer from Warsaw. His name was Salve. And he ..

La: Salve?

Gl: And in front of this fantastical backdrop, he started to sing a song I didn't know at that time: "Eli, Eli ..

- Gl: ... why did you leave me? (*video and audio resume*) They brought us into the fire, but no one would give up your holy scripture". He sang it in Yiddish, and that's how I understood it.
- La: But he was, he was in the death camp?
- Gl: He was with us. He was with us. The SS had pulled him out and then he belonged to the so-called "Court Jews". They pulled him out of there and then he had to sing, sing for them
- La: That was an order?
- Gl: That was an order. Just as they pulled out a young one, who was fourteen, named Eddek. He came to Treblinka with an enormous, with an enormous accordion, and then they pulled him out and he had to play for them too, in the evening in the SS barrack. And then this Eddek later played a very important role in the revolt.
- La: But this opera singer, this Salve sang this song in Yiddish..
- Gl: He sang the song in Yiddish in front of the incredible backdrop of this pyre, on which they started incinerating people at the end of November '42. That was the first time we saw it. And then we realized that the dead were no longer going to be buried; they were to be burned.
- La: So that was an incredible scene for you?
- Gl: When I look back and remember, it is this scene which for me, even to this day, somehow emerges as if out of Hell.

- La: The SS were there; they heard it?
- Gl: No, the SS were not there. That was in the barrack where we slept.
- La: But you said it was an order, it was an order from them.
- Gl: That's something different. In the evenings, Salve had to go into the SS barrack to the SS, and sing there with others. As time went on, they pulled out musicians and formed a small orchestra. The head of the orchestra was Arthur Gold – that was his name – from Warsaw. But he... Salve didn't have to go every evening, or not right away to the SS barrack after the end of the workday, only whenever he was called.
- La: Yes, of course. And he...
- Gl: When he was with us, he sang for us.
- La: Yes, I suspect he never sang this song, "Why did you leave us?" for the SS.
- Gl: I don't know. I don't know; I only heard that once – maybe it was Suchomel – Suchomel got it into his head and ordered Salve to sing the song of the Jewish Mamme for them.
- La: Do you remember, Suchomel told me about a, the, the choir, the choir is free. Freedom like air, a bit of freedom.
- Gl: Yes, that was something else. Kurt Franz thought of that. Kurt Franz decided that a song for, shall we say, a Treblinka hymn was to be composed. And one of us actually...

- Gl: did that and he came from Maerich-Ostrau; he composed the words and the music.
- La: And did you sing?
- Gl: And we had to sing that several times a day. It's a march and I'll probably never forget it.
- La: Do you remember it? Can you sing it?
- Gl: Maybe not to sing, but I can recite it: "With a steady stride and pace, and the eyes always straight ahead, looking ever brave and cheerful at the world, the column marches to work. For us, nothing matters today except Treblinka, which is our fate. That's why we totally adapted ourselves to Treblinka in short order. We obey the orders of the Commandants and listen to their signals and respond to everything that our duties demand of us in stride and pace. Work is everything to us, as is obedience and duty. We want to work more and more until a bit of luck beckons us."
- La: What does it mean, "Until a bit of luck beckons us"? Is that bitter irony?
- Gl: That is bitter irony. Somehow that got left in there. It's nothing more than irony.
- La: What do you mean?
- Gl: Simply that he composed it that way and they left it in. I can't imagine what "a bit of luck" would be.
- La: It is death.



Gl: “A bit of luck”... There was no luck in Treblinka. Not, not, not a trace of it.

La: Yes, yes, it’s mockery. What does it mean?

Gl: Well, it is only mockery. That is a mockery like . . . just like when people arrived with the transports and got undressed in the undressing station, the ones from Theresienstadt . . .

Bob. No. 161 (GL 28)

Gl: In Treblinka there was always noise. Treblinka was full of screaming, bellowing and singing too.

La: The Germans also . . .

Gl: And mixed together were the snappy German . . . the German snappy songs were mixed with the melancholy Ukrainian songs, sung by the Ukrainians, up to six harmonies, for they are known for their finely attuned ear, the Ukrainians, and among all the Yiddish songs: Eli, Eli, Yiddish Mamme, Stefeler Bels and others.

La: And the Ukrainians too.

Gl: There was always noise. And that was something which made Treblinka unique and characterized it. But you couldn’t hear any bird songs over Treblinka. Never, not the whole time . . .

La: No bird . . .

Gl: . . . never did I see a bird in Treblinka.

La: Yes, it’s impossible to imagine that. But yesterday you spoke of the . . . you said that there was never a moment of privacy.

Gl: In Treblinka, you were always just a part of a mass, a crowd,

Gl: a mass. Never, at no time was it possible to be alone. You could never do something alone or...

(GL 30)

Gl: How were we dressed in Treblinka, we slaves and death-diggers? That was another absurd peculiarity of Treblinka. We were already on the other side of the threshold of death, so we were allowed to take whatever we wanted from the mountains of things. And so, for instance, in the early part, I wore a blue velvet shirt, beige riding pants, high riding boots and around my neck...

La: Boots?

Gl: High riding boots, polished to a shine, purposely, and a colorful scarf around my neck and that's how I sorted the things from the dead and dragged dead people from the ramp.

La: Why do you say "purposely"?

Gl: Everything was done on purpose, we, we talked about that, that's what Robert Altschuh advised us about it because the SS, it made an impression on the SS. He wasn't supposed to see that I took something from the pile, he wasn't supposed to see me change into (*the clothes*) somewhere but, let's say, he acknowledged with approval that I looked good, and that protected you to a certain extent from the arbitrariness of the SS men. Anything extreme, anything conspicuous somehow made an impression on the SS and

- Gl: actually, it was what was normal in Treblinka and what was absurd in normal life.
- La: And when these clothes got dirty?
- Gl: When these clothes were dirty and torn, just took them off and got something else. And when I was lying in the, in the barrack on the wooden platform and the fleas were biting me...
- La: Fleas?
- Gl: ...and I saw that my pajamas were full of blood, I said to myself, well, tomorrow I have to get myself a new set of silk pajamas from up above, from the pile at the sorting station. And then I realized that tomorrow's pajamas aren't in Treblinka yet. They are coming. My next pajamas still have to come to Treblinka – they are on their way.
- La: You thought that? How so?
- Gl: And it was always dangerous when we changed our clothes. Especially in Treblinka, none of us was ever alone.
- La: But excuse me. There were fleas and lice?
- Gl: There were... in Treblinka there were fleas in summer and lice in winter.
- La: Always?
- Gl: All year. The lice usually came with the transports, the poor transports from, from, from the East. And that's how the whole of Treblinka was louse-ridden as of the winter of '42/43. And in summer came the fleas. Of course, with the lice came typhus.

La: Do you get used to that or not?

Gl: Hard to say. I took it as something terrible

La: Terrible . .

Gl: And I know, especially in summer, my whole body, I felt as if my whole body were on fire.

La: As, as, as in . .

Gl: As, as in a fire. My whole body was burning.

La: It was hopeless, hopeless? There was no chance, to these lice . .

Gl: There was no way to destroy them. It got so bad that the SS even tried to set up a disinfection, a disinfection, and in this disinfection our sleepwear was put, we had that disinfected, but it didn't help much because if there isn't enough hot water, then you can't get rid of the lice.

La: The SS themselves were contaminated. They had lice too?

Gl: The SS, of course, lived in a separate barrack and they had enough hot water. They had their clothes washed with hot water. In contrast to us, for us there was no such thing as laundry.

La: How, for instance, did you sleep?

Gl: There were wooden platforms, actually just boards, no beds and the platforms ran from one wall of the barrack to almost the other wall, except for a small aisle. That was one continuous area without any

- Gl: separations. And on this platform which was about twelve meters long, so many of us slept that each of us had about 30 or 40 centimeters space.
- La: How many levels?
- Gl: Usually there were three levels or two, but usually three levels, three levels. That's how we slept.
- La: No privacy anywhere.
- Gl: In Treblinka – that was part of the absurdity, you never had any peace and quiet.
- La: Never any peace.
- Gl: Never any peace. Quiet was actually something I recognized only later, that it was something that didn't exist in Treblinka. Now I know how it was. You were only a part of a mass, and that's how you moved about. You moved about in a mass. You . . . you slept within a mass. You got undressed and dressed in . . . in a mass. You were . . . on the latrine in a mass, and everything, everything you did, happened in a mass. If you sat, whatever movement you made, it was within a mass. If you cried, it was within a mass.
- La: And always running?
- Gl: And added to that, you were always supposed to move on the run.
- La: Always?

Gl: That originated from the early days, from the early period, from the period of total arbitrariness, at the time...

Bob. No. 163 (GL 30)

La: Where were they, who were the Court Jews?

Gl: The Court Jews were Jews like us. They were taken out of the transports, and they were people who were assigned to do certain kinds of work for the SS man, as well as the Ukrainians, that is, not... they didn't have anything directly to do with the transports, with liquidation of the transports, rather they were actually servants, servants of the SS rulers. So, for example, from one transport, they pulled out this 14-year old Eddek – he came with an enormous accordion and he had to do housework in the SS barrack during the day and around the SS barrack. And in the evenings, if he were called, he had to entertain the SS men in the SS barrack.

La: Who came up with the name "Court Jews"?

Gl: When I got to Treblinka, it already existed. All those who were assigned there had to wear an armband which said "Court Jew".

La: Court Jew?

Gl: There were many armbands of various colors and with various classification everywhere in Treblinka.

La: For instance?

Gl: The Court Jews had a yellow armband with the name...

La: With the lettering "Court Jew".

Gl: With the lettering "Court Jew". The foremen had a red

- Gl: armband with the lettering “Foreman”. Then there were the Kapos. They had an armband too. And the people working in the hospital, and those having to incinerate the people killed with a shot in the neck – they had an armband with a red cross, with the insignia of the Red Cross.
- La: Unbelievable. Yes. How many people worked in the hospital?
- Gl: In the hospital, there were...
- La: ...the so-called hospital.
- Gl: During the initial period, three, and in the later period, two people worked there. One of them was Kapo Kurland. In the world outside, he was a counterfeiter, what they called “counterfeiter” in that area, someone who is today called an alternate medicine practitioner, a sort of people’s healer. And later, he was one of the initiators of the revolt in Treblinka.
- La: He was a Jew from Poland?
- Gl: He was a Polish Jew.
- La: A charming man!
- Gl: He was... he was an older person and everyone of us respected him. Despite the work... in the hospital. Somehow.
- La: Just what exactly was his work?
- Gl: pile up the corpses on the pyre and burn them.
- La: Yes. There were people every day who were killed in the hospital?
- Gl: During the times of the so-called peak period when the transports arrived, there were shootings, followed by incineration every day

La: Old people and ..

Gl: Mostly they were old people but also children. It went, like, like, this it went: When a transport arrived, they were told, the old, frail people, especially those who couldn't move fast, should go to the hospital for an examination. And the hospital was very close to the ramp. So, that's where they were led. We had to do that too. I had to do it too.

La: You led people into the hospital?

Gl: Yes. And in the hospital was a little, a little wooden booth and on the wooden booth was also the insignia of the Red Cross. That's how the shooting area was camouflaged. It was just a small spot. *(no video as a ship passes by)*

La: But it's important to describe this hospital in detail... *(video resumes)*

Gl: The old, frail people were led into the hospital. They had to get undressed there, or if they were too weak and unable, then they were...

La: ..helped by the people...

Gl: ...by the people who worked, the ones who worked in the hospital or had to work there, had to help them or simply tear their clothes off them.

La: Did you see that in the hospital?

Gl: Yes.

La: How was it?

Gl: several times in the hospital. It wasn't a big place. Maybe about



- Gl: 16 by 12 meters, and surrounded by this high fence, with this green fence, with the brush and the barbed wire. So, you couldn't, you couldn't see into it. *(no video)* And the path into it led then through a narrow alley. Very short, but similar, a similar method as the tube.
- La: Like a tube? *(no video and audio)*
- Gl: Yes. A little, a little labyrinth. And in the middle was a trench. On the side, on the left side, if you .. when you came in, the same as where the little booth was, built in there was a kind of wooden .. a wooden beam, that was the springboard. On this springboard, the people were either put there to stand, or if they could no longer do that, they had to sit there and then, as they called it in Treblinka jargon, Corporal Mieter "cured everyone with a pill."
- La: "Cured with a pill"?
- Gl: With a shot in the neck.
- La: Daily?
- Gl: During the time of the transports it was daily. During that time, the trench – it was about 3.5 to 4 meters deep – was full of corpses.
- La: Full.
- Gl: *(video and audio resume)* Once I witnessed that from a transport .. It was like this: We had to take blankets and carry the sick ones, or simply those who could no longer walk, in the blanket. Always four of us and one on each end of the blanket. That's how I

Gl: witnessed that Mieter shot a pregnant woman who was having labor pains. That's when I thought to myself, back then, back then, "So, in Treblinka life ends even before it's begun."

Bob. No. 164 (GL 31)

La: I want to come back to the expression "Court Jews". These SS were actually educated people. That is an expression of the Renaissance.

Gl: ...from the Middle Ages.

La: The Middle Ages. Yes. They decided..

Gl: They decided, they decided that these people, who were to serve the SS, should be called "Court Jews". That's how they... that's how their armbands were.

La: Yes, and what were the work Court Jews did? I'd like to... to polish boots?

Gl: To polish boots, yes, to polish boots, wash clothes, clean the SS barrack, to clean the rooms, where the SS slept, etc.

La: Were there many of them?

Gl: There were, there weren't many, maybe twelve or fifteen, and that was only in the first period. Later, though they were still called Court Jews, they no longer wore an armband.

La: Why?

Gl: I have this explanation for it: In the early time period,

- Gl: during the time when everything was helter-skelter everywhere, where an SS man simply pulled a person out and whipped him right into the hospital, where he shot him. They had to distinguish these people somehow, so they didn't simply get onto the treadmill and disappear. For they... they were actually the first, let's say, specialists in Treblinka – the Court Jews and then those people pulled out for the functioning – for the locksmith shop, the taylor shop, etc. And in the broader sense of the word, they were all called “Court Jews”.
- La: And that means, that the SS wanted to keep these people?
- Gl: And the SS already wanted to keep these people in the first period. These people were to be marked in such a way, that they weren't mixed together with the regular slaves of the sorting station and of the, of the death chambers, the gas chambers.
- La: But did the Court Jews live in a separate barrack, for instance?
- Gl: During the early period, they didn't live in a separate barrack, but they lived in a separate section of a barrack. It was like this in Treblinka: There wasn't a barrack for... there weren't several barracks for us, but one big barrack, which was U-shaped, very big, and it had several sections. Though they were called Barrack 1, Barrack 2, and 3, in terms of construction, it was just one building.

- La: And in contrast to you, were the Court Jews privileged or, or not?
- Gl: In a way, the Court Jews were privileged during the early period, purely by the fact that they didn't have to do the worst work. They didn't have to sort through things, they didn't have to carry, carry, pull corpses, they didn't have to incinerate corpses. They did only the work of servants, or sew clothes, or polish shoes, or even make shoes for the SS.
- La: Yes, and the Kapos?
- Gl: It was different with the Kapos and the Foremen, it was different in Treblinka than in other concentration camps.
- La: How, how were the Kapos chosen?
- Gl: Actually by coincidence.
- La: By coinci... *(doesn't understand the word)*
- Gl: By coincidence.
- La: Coincidence.
- Gl: But somehow the SS always chose someone who was a screamer, someone who could yell loudly, or, that was interesting, that the SS somehow had respect for certain personalities, who were conspicuous and who, as I've learned later... sociology showed there are leader characteristics. There are simply people, there's a group and suddenly someone stands out and becomes the spokesman for the group. And I have to say that the SS men respected that somehow or respected, or

- Gl: had to respect that; that's simply, that's a law, a social-natural law. And that's how, for example, they made engineer Galewski the Camp Elder. They... Jelo Bloch...
- La: He was a Camp Elder?
- Gl: He was a Camp Elder, meaning that he was above the Kapos, the Head Kapo. So they made Jelo Bloch a Foreman. But at the same time, they made some people Kapos and Foremen, who simply pushed themselves forward with their roughness and screaming. Kapo Jurek, Kapo Blau – he was already older – came from Vienna.
- La: Blau?
- Gl: Kapo Blau. It was the only time they pulled a married couple out of the transport. His wife – they were older already – his wife worked with the women then.
- La: Were you in Treblinka when that happened?
- Gl: I came to Treblinka when Kapo Blau was already there, and I heard tell, that Blau and his wife had heard or had a sense of what was happening and begged the SS so long till they were pulled out.
- La: They begged?
- Gl: Yes, but I was only told that.
- La: Why did the SS say “yes”?
- Gl: I, I don't know – I can't say. Much of what happened in Treblinka

- Gl: happened through pure coincidence.
- La: And so the only case of..
- Gl: That was the only case in which a man and his wife were taken out of the transport. Then there were, there also, there were two cases where they took a father and a son out of the transport – that was the old and the young Salzberg, and the old and the young Schermann. Both of them, the Schermanns, played together in the orchestra later. But the whole system was different from other concentration camps. The Kapos and the Foremen were not our enemies.
- La: They were not..
- Gl: They were part of us. And in time, pretty soon actually, a system developed. They all had whips.
- La: Whips too..
- Gl: They all had whips, long whips, and they... they... it was supposed to be their job to drive us to work with the whips.
- La: Did they...
- Gl: I don't know of a single case, where someone...

Bob. No. 161 (GL 32)

- Gl: So, the Kapos and the Foremen in Treblinka were not our enemies. Pretty soon a system developed. They were

- Gl: actually part of us. And I don't know of a case where a Kapo or a Foreman beat one of us, if an SS man wasn't around. And even then, if he had to hit us, he did it in such a way, that is, never with his full strength. But, and maybe this again was one of the peculiarities of Treblinka, very soon, a kind of conspiracy...
- La: Conspiracy.
- Gl: ...developed. A conspiracy in the sense that whoever cheated us, who didn't behave properly, who didn't share food with others in times of hunger, he was at the mercy of the Kapos and Foremen.
- La: Yes, I understand.
- Gl: And that happened tacitly. He was beaten in front of the SS, but then with full force. The others not. No other ones. From time to time, there were selections for work in the upper camp, the worst work, and we were all afraid of that, the work in the two gas chambers in the extermination camp. And that went like that too – not quite transparent. The Kapo and the Foreman didn't say "that one or that one" to the SS man. It was like this: Technical Sergeant Küttner asked, "Well, Kapo, which ones are you assigning to Camp 2?" The Kapo didn't say. He didn't name, "him, him, him, him, him." They went through the rows with the SS man and the Kapo stopped a little longer in front of one

Gl: or another. And with the others, he passed by. And somehow, the SS man knew that the Kapo meant that one. So, we always got rid of those elements that weren't quite reliable, not quite 100%.

La: But why was there such a solidarity in Treblinka between the Kapo and the prisoners?

Gl: They all sensed that without solidarity, that without solidarity there is no survival. It wasn't possible either...

La: Yes, but it wasn't like that in other camps, like Auschwitz, for example.

Gl: Yes, I heard that later, but in Treblinka...

Bob. No. 165 (GL 33)

Gl: The hospital in the first part of the camp so close to the arrival ramp was built that way, without a doubt, to sort people out, who would otherwise have hindered the speedy and smooth proceedings to the gas, and those were the old people, the sick, frail ones and some children.

La: Who selected these people?

Gl: Those were the SS, who, on the ramp, indicated to people that they would go to the hospital, they should stand aside and they'll go to the hospital for an examination.

La: And in a normal transport?



- Gl: In a normal transport, for example, a transport from Theresienstadt, there were maybe four or five such people. But there were cases, in which, for whatever reason, children arrived by themselves or were somehow separated from their parents. And with that, they were sent to the hospital too and shot there. And the hospital was also for us, the slaves in Treblinka, the last station.
- La: The hospital! Not the gas chambers? The hospital.
- Gl: Not the gas chambers. We always ended in the hospital. Also, we were never shot on the spot. We were always brought into the hospital first. In the first period, when they simply rotated us, taking new ones out of the transports and shooting many of us, then the SS simply whipped the person into the hospital and shot him.
- La: Into the hospital?
- Gl: Into the hospital. Whipped into the hospital. Whipped him into it.
- La: Why?
- Gl: Yes, in the early period for various reasons. Either the SS man didn't like one of us, or because he wasn't shaved, or he made a worn-out impression. He was already marked and in Treblinka that meant: he already had traces of the whip in his face. That was always dangerous. Somehow, the lash of a whip in the face, and usually it was an open wound, that was like... that drew the SS men like wild animals. Then they became even worse,

- Gl: beat even more and if possible, in the face and well, that was like, like marching orders into death.
- La: It was..
- Gl: Then, then Mieter skulked around everywhere, and if he saw someone, who was marked in this way, then he whipped him into the hospital, maybe with the help of another one, an SS man, and shot him there.
- La: There was a big fear about being marked?
- Gl: And of course, everyone of us took care not to be marked, not to be “branded”.
- La: You were never...
- Gl: The Polish Jews had an expression for that, “Klepsidra”.
- La: Klepsidra? Klepsidra, that means the time is short.
- Gl: Yes and..
- La: Like a Klepsidra.
- Gl: And Mieter, because, because of this action.. he was in charge of the hospital actually, if I understood that correctly, the Polish Jews called him “Malmachome”, the angel of death.
- La: Angel of death.
- Gl: And in Czech, we called him “the Devout Marksman”; not because he was religious, but he had such a look in his eyes, always so motionless, so watery like fish eyes and without, without motion.
- La: And you yourself were never marked?
- Gl: I was never marked. And if I remember correctly, I wasn’t beaten much. I got lashes of the whip

- Gl: but mostly, those were either while loading the things, that is, in a crowd, when they, the, the whole line of people that was moving along, were driving them so they would run while working.
- La: And you yourself transported the people into the hospital who had died during the transport?
- Gl: People were also placed in the hospital who were already dead or half-dead on the transport, however you want to see it. And these people...
- La: Half-dead already...
- Gl: That too. And we had to...these people, we had to come out of the barrack, the sorting barrack where we worked and had to carry these people into the hospital. And that happened especially with the Polish transports that the whole hospital trench would be full. I remember that with the transport from the East on the cold days in January '42, I had to carry corpses out of the transports where only the limbs in my hands, because they were all frozen, the corpses. But mostly the trench in the hospital was full...
- La: Was there a fire in this...
- Gl: There was a pyre. They built a pyre in the hospital and on the pyre, piled, and on the pyre the corpses were burned.

La: In the trenches.

Gl: In the trenches, and that is another...

Bob. No. 166 (GL 34)

Gl: In contrast to Auschwitz, there were no incineration ovens, no places for burning that were covered; in Treblinka everything was out in the open, under the open sky. In the gas chambers, they had built a big grate out of tracks and on this grate they could burn up to 2,000 people at once, on a giant pyre. There was something smaller in Camp 1, in the hospital, where people, who had been shot in the hospital, were burned on a smaller pyre. When we ended in the hospital, it was because someone didn't like us, because we had been beaten to a pulp already, so we couldn't work anymore, or because we were sick.

La: And this hospital was also...

Gl: And the, the, the, the, shooting area in the hospital was not covered either, just an, an, an open open place, that is without a roof...

La: There was no roof?

Gl: No roof, no roof, only fenced off, so no one could look in. Almost without exception, those who could no longer bear it in Treblinka, ended in the hospital with a shot in the neck.

La: Everyone.

Gl: I remember a single exception, a single case. That was in February, maybe '43, and it was one of us from the Sorting Detachment. We had to sort all the clothes and had been strictly ordered to remove every Jewish star. And Technical Küttner warned us several times that there were any slip-ups, we would get the ultimate punishment. After we had sorted the clothes and bound them into bundles, we had to put our name and number into the packet. And this note was removed only when the packet was loaded, when empty train cars arrived and when the cars were loaded. And during one of those times, during an inspection, on a coat . .

La: . . . a Jewish star . .

Gl: . . . a Jewish star was found.

La: And what happened?

Gl: And it was discovered when the note was taken out, that it was one of us, a very young, 16-year old, somewhere from the Polish region. And then Küttner called everyone in the station together, and the boy had to undress in front of us and in the middle of the sorting area, he was shot as punishment and as a warning to us.

- La: But why death for such a small thing?
- Gl: He overlooked something and if you did anything wrong in Treblinka, as I said before ..
- La: But why did they...
- Gl: If you did anything wrong in Treblinka, or something that didn't look good, then you were dead.
- La: Yes, why was it so important, this Jewish star?
- Gl: The removal of the Jewish star was probably so important because the train cars that we had loaded with the sorted clothes, they had addresses with destinations, and those were various cities in Germany: Darmstadt, Düsseldorf, etc.
- La: That meant that the, the...
- Gl: And the clothes were allocated to those cities, and we suspected that they were going to charities, maybe for the so-called Winter Help.
- La: Meaning that these clothes...
- Gl: And of course, of course, the people weren't supposed to know that the clothes came from Jews.
- La: Yes, that's clear. These Jews' clothes...
- Gl: That was the only case, as far as I remember, that one of us, as we said, "was going to one's end"... in Polish it's "wikontischk", "going to one's end" not in the hospital.
- La: Yes... okay.

- Gl: Yes, you dreamed in Treblinka too. You dreamed in Treblinka if you were sleeping, and you dreamed in Treblinka if you were awake. You dreamed, that it's all a bad dream.
- La: A bad dream.
- Gl: You will wake up at some point, you have to wake up; this can't be real. You dreamed that the world must know about this by now. It not possible. And...
- La: You couldn't be all alone.
- Gl: The world has to do something. They send planes, they send soldiers because it can't be that the world simply looks on and does nothing, doesn't help. And you dreamed that one day you'll get out, and you dreamed that you'll survive, and you will tell all about it. You'll write about it all, you'll everything..
- La: I understand, but you have to try to show this feeling of complete aloneness.
- Gl: And you had, you had a feeling you have been abandoned by everyone. That was perhaps the worst. We all had the feeling after a certain time when we were in Treblinka that we've been abandoned by the whole world. Treblinka is in and of itself a small, evil world, somehow plunged off the big world. Somehow we find ourselves in Hell, in an inferno. Finally we dreamed only about maybe, about a miracle, that we will somehow get out.

Gl: Yes, we dreamed; we wished that something would happen. And someone, at least one of us would survive who could tell what happened in Treblinka, because we were all afraid that the world would never really know about Treblinka, the world would never know what was possible, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, among people of such a high, of such a high culture.

La: Yes, but I think that was the most important. You were afraid..

(GL 37)

Gl: And it is precisely this thought, that the world had to learn about Treblinka, which led us to the revolt. That was one of the purposes and goals of the revolt. One of us was to save himself and then tell the world what Treblinka was – what happened in Treblinka.

La: But was it your primary fear, that perhaps a million Jews and you too...?

Gl: We were constantly afraid that the world would never know about Treblinka.

La: Where did all these people go?

Gl: Which people?

La: They... all the Jews. It was, it was really a possibility that no one in the world would know, would know.



- Gl: We were afraid we would all be killed and there will be no witness, absolutely no one.
- La: Yes, I understand, but I want to understand more – this was not an intellectual fear, that was reconstructed, but that was your actual fear at the time?
- Gl: Yes, it was, it was the fear that no one would survive. No one will about Treblinka ..
- La: No one will know...
- Gl: ...no one will know what Treblinka was. And later too, when I fled with Karl and when I lived in Germany under an assumed name, we lived constantly with the terrifying thought that if we don't survive, there is no one who can testify about Treblinka.
- La: Yes, you didn't know beyond that ..
- Gl: We thought, at that time we thought that we were the only two out of almost a million people, who can speak about the death of these million people.
- La: Yes, I understand. But you are talking about the revolt and say that this fear led to the idea of the revolt ..
- Gl: ...led to the revolt ..
- La: ...to flee...
- Gl: ...it was a reason...
- La: ...didn't you think of fleeing?
- Gl: Yes, we entertained the thought of fleeing. Almost everyone. There were several attempts in Treblinka. We too,

Gl: the Czech group, had such an idea and a plan, to call an SS man to the door of the barrack in the night, under the pretext that one of us was sick or there's something going on in the barrack, and to attack the SS man. One of us was to put on the uniform of the SS man and then to flee with the others. Without our knowing it, others had this idea too. But they were overpowered – that happened in December, '42, and they were all shot in the hospital.

La: But there were some successes, weren't there?

Gl: There were some successful escapes from Treblinka but only in the first period, in the first stage, where everything wasn't as well organized. And there was an escape that had already been organized by us, several of us. We helped two to escape, who were hidden in the train cars that were loaded. They had the assignment of getting in touch with the resistance movement and to inform the world.

La: Bomba thought of that.

Gl: Excuse me?

La: Bomba, Abraham Bomba.

Gl: Abraham Bomba. I don't know if it was Abraham Bomba. I know only of two, whom we helped to escape. And that had to be very well organized because everything had to go like clockwork. So, from a transport that arrived, two were secretly hidden under the clothes.

La: Yes.

Gl: Those two fled

- Gl: in the loaded train cars and the other two stayed in Treblinka. During the first period in Treblinka, we were beings without a name, without a face.
- La: Yes. And who survived? What were the conditions?
- Gl: Yes, how did one survive in Treblinka? The image that the biggest and the strongest, that the physically strongest survived is incorrect. I know from experience, since I was never as big and strong; I think that the person who survived was someone who firmly believed that he would survive. I have to say about myself and about Karl that we never thought that we wouldn't survive. Somehow we were absolutely convinced that we would get make it. Maybe at the time, it was due to our age, our youth. When you are so young, you believe less in your own death than if you're older. And something else: If you want to survive under those conditions, you have to (*replicate?*) in every detail . .

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- Gl: And something else was important for surviving Treblinka. You had to do everything as you would in normal life. With that I mean, you had to brush your teeth, you had to shave, you had to get water somewhere and wash yourself. And in this way, you actually had to distance yourself from Treblinka. In this way, you had to remove yourself from the conditions there and to try to take care of yourself as in normal life.

La: How was it possible? You said there was no privacy and you were always in a crowd..

Gl: Yes, it was possible only under very difficult conditions and you had to do it all.. you had to take it on as a battle.

La: A battle?

Gl: If you, if you managed to get a bit of water somewhere and to shave, then you had to see it as a victory – daily, from one hour to the next.

La: But that meant a lot of self-discipline.

Gl: You needed iron discipline.

La: Iron.

Gl: Iron discipline.

La: An inner iron discipline.

Gl: An inner iron discipline. Without that, you couldn't survive in Treblinka.

La: But it was always a life of extreme and constant danger.

Gl: It was a life always on, on, on the edge. I can't say... at the edge of death, beyond the threshold of death, under circumstances that demanded a constant battle. Everything was a battle. At certain times, it was a battle to get yourself food. At certain times, it was a battle to get a new razorblade to shave. And when you accomplished that, you had to see it as a victory, as I said, to celebrate it as a victory. And by means of these small victories – those were small

- Gl: victories – by means of these small victories, you survived.
- La: Yes. But what was the determination to live under such conditions? What was the meaning of ..
- Gl: That's hard to say... what was the meaning .. who had the determination, who didn't have the determination. I learned one thing in my life that was important and that's the following: How do you respond to such a challenge? The unshaved face is a challenge. Either I shave or it places me in jeopardy. If I get lashes of the whip in the face, then I am marked and will go into the hospital. And that's how you survived day by day in Treblinka. And sometimes you had to do things, for which you would be ashamed in normal life. But that was the case in all the camps.
- La: Why be ashamed?
- Gl: You couldn't share your food with everyone. You could share the food only with your own group. And you were self-oriented; you were self-oriented with your own group. You didn't share it with others. And later, when I was alone with Karl, we shared food with each other, shared it only with each other.
- La: You spoke of solidarity. Was that solidarity or not? You said, we didn't share. Was it solidarity or not? No, that is... do you understand my question?

- Gl: The overall solidarity was the solidarity for the revolt. In the other cases, there was solidarity only in the small groups.
- La: But did you really believe in this revolt or was the revolt also a dream?
- Gl: The revolt was no longer a dream. We prepared for the revolt as of November '42. Something was always getting in the way. Once it was typhus, another time the SS sent some of the organizers to the second camp to the gas chambers. They always sensed something, something, suspected something. Then the transports from the Balkan countries arrived in the middle of it, then again, in June – I think it was in May or June – when I myself still had typhus, it was time. At that time, I was housed in the recuperation room and on that day, on one particular day, the revolt was to break out. They had even smuggled the grenades out of the munitions depot. The boys, who had to clean up the SS barrack, did that.
- La: The grenades.
- Gl: They smuggled the grenades out without fuses. The fuses for the grenades were stored separately. So then everything was called off and the grenades were smuggled back in.
- La: Back?
- Gl: So, now the question is, how does one survive in Treblinka? You have to have something that may be written in the stars, what we call luck, or maybe it was

Gl: divine providence or maybe the mathematical law of probability – depending on who believes in what. When . . . when I stood there naked as Mieter was walking by . . . why did he select me?

La: Yes, that was the first coincidence.

Gl: Through divine intervention or through a, a, a law, a law of mathematical probability. Probability, the mathematical probability that out of a million people, one person survives somehow, despite everything. And it was the same when I was housed in the recuperation room. If the revolt had broken out on that day, I wouldn't be sitting here today.

La: Yes, but this question, “who survives?”, that is an obscene question.

Gl: That is part of it. What is also part of survival . . . we could call it coincidence or luck.

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Gl: The revolt happened in the following way: Close to the SS barrack was a munitions depot. Only a few Court Jews, mostly the young ones, had access to the SS barrack. Among these was Eddek with the accordion. One day he was going by the door of the munitions depot and pushed a metal sliver into the lock.

La: Eddek?

Gl: Eddek. And when the door could no longer be opened, the locksmiths from the locksmith's shop were called up, and they came and

- Gl: said, “This can’t be repaired here. We have to take the door to the locksmith’s shop.”
- La: That was the plan, that was a part of..
- Gl: The whole thing was plan for the revolt. And in the locksmith’s shop, in all the chaos, they made a copy of the key to the lock of the munitions depot. And then they were supposed to... these guys were to smuggle the hand grenades and possibly pistols out of the munitions depot. And that was only possible on a Monday, because on Mondays garbage and the big refuse was taken out with a cart. And they needed this cart to hide and smuggle out the hand grenades and weapons. And finally, they decided on Monday, August 2, 1943 for the revolt. At that time, no more transports were coming. In June, the rest of the liquidated from the Warsaw Ghetto were brought in. At least half of the people in the train cars were dead. I remember that the trench in the hospital, was up to, was full to the board.
- La: With people, who were dead..
- Gl: With people who were dead from the transport from Warsaw, from the liquidated Ghetto. And then – and that was a strange omen – in July, about 400 Gypsies were brought to Treblinka and gassed.
- La: Gypsies.
- Gl: And then we thought, so, if all the Jews are



Gl: perhaps already liquidated or will be liquidated, then Treblinka is to exist to liquidate all the other “Untermenschen” – subhumans.

La: No end in sight.

Gl: And that could probably have continued . . . that probably could have continued, if the Nazis had won the war. Treblinka had been built, built, expanded already. Further additions were made to Treblinka. The whole train station was renovated – a big clock was added above the train station, and everywhere were signs, ticket counters, train personnel offices.

La: But that was completely new. That didn’t exist before.

Gl: That didn’t exist at the time when I was deported to Treblinka. Everything was nicely prepared. There were wagons with sand, at the edge there were painted rocks. There were addresses, signs everywhere.

La: In various languages?

Gl: It was all in German. The roads were named, for instance, Carl Seidel Street – that was the road that went past the SS barrack to the commandant headquarters, named for the oldest SS man in Treblinka.

La: Was there also a zoo?

Gl: There was the so-called Max Biala Barrack, which was the barrack of the Ukrainians, and named after an SS man, who was killed, stabbed to death by a deported Jew, a certain Berliner.

- Gl: So, on August 2, Treblinka was a huge freshly polished, painted trap, purely for swallowing up more human beings.
- La: Ready for eternity.
- Gl: Ready for further liquidations.
- La: And the SS had no premonition?
- Gl: I don't know if the SS in Treblinka knew anything about further transports or not. It was made ready; it's also possible..
- La: No, no, I mean premonition about the revolt
- Gl: Whether the SS had a premonition about the revolt or not, is hard to say. I think according to how they behaved and how they suddenly came up with an order and transferred some of us from one detachment to another, they sensed something, or simply that through those measures, they were protecting themselves against the possibility of a revolt, the possibility of a revolt being organized. And then came what was perhaps the last absurd event a week before the revolt. There was practically no more work in Treblinka. Everything was done, everything was... finished, prepared, ready for the arrival of more people. Above the main gate, close to the commandant's headquarters was a big globe with SS symbols, with the SS emblem and symbols of SS men. Then Franz gave the order that there should be entertainment.

- Gl: A cabaret show was to be organized.
- La: Eight days before the revolt.
- Gl: That was one week . . . the Sunday before the revolt.
- La: A cabaret, how?
- Gl: And there was a skit, there was a boxing match, a real boxing match between two, who knew, so two Jews.

Bob. No. 170 (GL 39)

- Gl: You have to imagine this: A sunny day in July in Treblinka, a Sunday afternoon. The surface of the Roll Call grounds is pitch black with freshly laid and stamped cinders. On this surface on a podium, the SS men sit in green jackets and black riding pants. And behind them the slaves, us . . .
- La: How many slaves?
- Gl: All of them shaved bald and behind us in black uniforms the Ukrainian guards. At that time, eight days before the revolt, we are about 250 in the first part of the camp and about 150 in the second part of the camp, maybe somewhat fewer. In time, the workforce in Treblinka was decimated from a thousand people at the time of my arrival in Treblinka – by the SS, by disease. And the SS kept the total workforce of Treblinka at this level of about 300, 400, 450. There are about 25 to 30 SS men present and over 100 Ukrainian guards.

- La: That's a lot. For 350 Jews, that's a lot.
- Gl: Not all of them are on duty. Sometimes only sixteen SS men are on duty and perhaps not more than 50 or 60 Ukrainian guards. And now a cabaret starts in Treblinka with a skit. Someone comes, sits down on the podium and reads the newspaper, let's say like after lunch and reads an advertisement aloud:...
- La: An advertisement.
- Gl: ...Health Resort Treblinka. Come and visit the newly renovated seaside resort Treblinka-Obermaidan. Beach access, fresh air. Room and board..
- La: Room and board.
- Gl: Good room and board. Medical care in the hospital, in the military hospital...and that's how it continued. And after this skit..
- La: Who.. did anyone laugh?
- Gl: No one laughs at that moment. No one laughs.
- La: Not the SS?
- Gl: Not the SS either. Maybe one or two smiled to themselves; there is almost no applause. But then comes the boxing match, a real boxing match – two of the Jews, who know how. It's not a serious boxing match but.. then because of Franz's orders, it becomes a parody. The two Shit Kapos fight one another. They are two who were selected for the latrines in the upper and lower parts of the camp. Both are somehow – maybe they aren't quite all there in the head, which is why

Gl: they were selected for this assignment, and so the boxing gloves are put on them and they are to fight one another. Then there is laughter, of course, and a lot of applause. Then there is singing..

La: But it's not a real fight?

Gl: Of course it's not a real fight. It's a parody. It's a farce, and that's how a happy Sunday afternoon in Treblinka ends.

La: After the fight, what was...

Gl: There is singing, and one of the singers, whom the SS had pulled out of a transport, sings various opera arias and at the end, the aria from the opera, "The Jewess of Halevi" with the famous line, "Avenger, I consecrate you to death". And that sounds fateful and promising. And in this moment, I see that one of the SS men turns around and looks at us. And that is Commandant, Franz Stangl.

La: Why? Did he...

Gl: Maybe he had a premonition. That's possible. I don't know. And that's how this afternoon ends. August 2 is a Monday. There is, of course, since early morning a lot of excitement everywhere.

La: Did anyone know?

Gl: Everyone knows what's coming.

La: Everyone?

Gl: Everyone. With the exception of two informers, whom we know, whom we know about. The women know it too – the twelve women, who are in the camp.

La: Twelve?

Gl: ...and the ones in the SS laundry... who have to work for the SS. But not all of them know the details. What I know, I got mostly from Rudolph Massarek, whom I knew from Prague and who, as a former officer, was on the organization committee.

La: How many weapons were in the hands of the organization committee?

Gl: When everything had been smuggled out, there were – as far as I know – two boxes of hand grenades, about six guns, as well as self-made bottles, bottles with gasoline which were later called Molotov Cocktails.

Bob. No. 171 (GL 40)

Gl: And that was all that we had, as far as I know.

La: Who was, who among the 350 Jews, who were in Treblinka at the time... Who knew how to use weapons?

Gl: I know that from Rudolph Massarek. When the revolt was being prepared and it had to be determined who, back then of the 600 or 650, let's say in February, beginning of March, actually knew how to handle weapons, who had ever used a weapon or who had had military training, it was discovered that

Gl: there were not more than 50.

La: Not more than 50...

Gl: ...than 50, than 50 of the 600 or so.

La: In February?

Gl: In February/March '43.

La: And in August?

Gl: I don't know. I can't say at this point. Not more than that. The following was part of the plan: The revolt was to break out at five in the afternoon. There was a reason for that. About one and a half kilometers from Treblinka was another labor camp. That labor camp was also called Treblinka. That was an enormous sandpit. And that was a forced labor camp, or if you will, a concentration camp, and perhaps with this camp, they wanted to cover up, hide the existence of Treblinka, the death camp.

La: It was a concentration camp for Poles.

Gl: From this labor camp, train cars went past Treblinka, the death camp – it was a one-track train line, built especially for the purpose of bringing people to Treblinka or into the camps of Treblinka. It always went by around five in the afternoon; that's when the prisoners of Treblinka came back. They were driven, driven back from their work. They had been driven out and they were driven back.

- Gl: In this labor camp, they were driven somewhere to work and then back. They were, they were, had to fill the cars with sand and with those cars they came back.
- La: Yes, why was it important?
- Gl: ...and then it was important that the revolt breaks out so that these prisoners could possibly join us.
- La: And these prisoners were Poles.
- Gl: And these prisoners were mostly Poles. We met at lunchtime that day. That's when Rudolph Massarek told us that he already has his hand grenades. And he has hidden them in the pigeon coop. In Treblinka there was even in this later period a zoo, a little zoo garden, which had been built for the SS. And then it was back to work. Two days before the revolt, the SS killed a whole group of woodchoppers for reasons that weren't entirely clear. Nineteen people. It was said that it was because of speculations with the Ukrainians, that is, doing business with the Ukrainians. With their hidden money, they bought food from the Ukrainians. But it wasn't quite clear to us if that was actually the real reason or if – as had happened so often – the SS had an inkling of the revolt again, or simply, if they took some action to intimidate us, so we wouldn't try anything. It was just that you could sense that there was something hanging in the humid, hot air that day. And now I may have to



GI: name a name, that I've never mentioned before – a man who during the preparations for the revolt didn't participate much, but then contributed a lot to the revolt..

Cassette 15 – Side A

Bob. No. 171 (GL 40) *(the camera roll is not shown in the video)*

GI: ...and sacrificed himself. The name of this man is Stanislaus Lichtblau from Maerisch-Ostrau; he was deported to Treblinka with his family, with wife and children. They were gassed immediately. He was pulled out. They called for an auto mechanic for the maintenance shop, for the SS workshop, for the garage in Treblinka. He responded – he was an auto mechanic – and from the beginning, from the time he came to Treblinka, he worked in the garage and always had a special dispensation. As a specialist, he never had anything to do with the machinery of killing, only with the vehicles of the SS personnel, the SS crew. We often met. He slept elsewhere on the sleeping platform but he came to us on the sleeping platform and he didn't say much. He just kept telling us, that it's easy for him; by the time the revolt takes place, the gas tank will be there – about thirty meters in front of the garage was a big gasoline storage tank. And it will be...for him the task will be easy. At that time, I was transferred from the Camouflage Detachment to the so-called wood station. We were supposed to replace the executed detachment

Gl: of woodchoppers. Around 3 p.m. – of course we had go-between men – about 3 p.m., we got the news that it's time, but if something suspicious were to occur, it will start earlier than at 5.

Bob. No. 172 (GL 41) (*video indicates camera roll GL 43*)

Gl: Then the last news came. I looked at my watch. It was four minutes to 4 in the afternoon. Alert: one of the informers is speaking with Küttner. Red alert. If a grenade goes off now, we'll start now. And at that...almost in that very moment, it happened. And then it really started. Grenades went off, bottles with gasoline, chaos, shots everywhere and suddenly, flames in every barrack. And then after a short time, an enormous flame at the site where the gasoline tank was, and then I knew, Stanislaus Lichtblau kept his promise and blasted the gasoline tank and himself into the air.

La: Aha.

Gl: I only know that there was complete chaos, and when I look back at it today, then it was a desperate attempt which was only partly successful. We did succeed in setting the barrack on fire. We did succeed in burning everything. And then there was no more ammunition. Nothing! And we ran around, and the SS and mainly the Ukrainians shot us like rabbits. Then something happened with which we hadn't counted – that the Ukrainians don't give up. They stayed true to the gold, food and prostitutes.

- Gl: And that's what they defended. And then the contact man, Lumbling, came and Karl yelled at him, "What now? What do we do now?" And he motioned to us to get out.
- La: How long did it last?
- Gl: The whole thing lasted maybe fifteen minutes.
- La: Ah, very fast.
- Gl: Not more, definitely not more. I could see in the, in the smoke, and when a grenade, as one of the grenades went off, Suchomel in a white uniform back then. Then he disappeared. What happened to him after that I learned only later. So, we got out of through the gate, that was the back part of the camp where we were at the time, across a field.. from the watch tower they were still shooting at us.
- La: How did you get through...
- Gl: Across the, across the.. there was another fence there with so-called..
- La: Barbed..
- Gl: No, it was a riding area across from armored tanks with barbed wire.. I don't know exactly how I got across; suddenly, suddenly I was over it. And then we continued to run. We knew the area a bit as workers in the Camouflage Detachment, where there's a pond, where we dug peat and that's where we ran to, jumped into the water and several Ukrainians came after us there. One of the Ukrainians

Gl: shot at us. I ducked under the water and swam back to the shore where I had jumped into the water, because I noticed that there are willow branches which hang over the water. . . swam back to the shore under water, came up and actually found myself hidden by the branches, which went out over the water. And then I dived down again and came up and that's how I kept myself hidden there. And suddenly I felt someone beside me and it was Karl Unger. And we stayed hidden there for eight hours until late at night. We still heard a lot of shots; we heard airplanes too. We heard dogs too, with which they were probably looking for us. And then when it was pitch dark, we came out of the water, went to the other shore and turned around and saw an enormous flame. But it was no longer the flame of the incineration grill of Treblinka!!! (*long pause*) We kept going the whole night. We swam across the Bug River, and simply walked away from Treblinka across the fields until it got a bit light. We took grain from the fields, that is, with straw; hid ourselves, and lay down on the straw and fell asleep.

La: Did you have a sense of the direction?

Gl: We had a plan. We agreed on this plan when we left, when we fled, and that is, to try to get back to Moravia into the so-called Beskids, into a mountain range, where we suspected, as we had heard before our deportation, that there were

- Gl: partisans there. And we wanted to join them. That was our initial plan of fleeing from Treblinka.
- La: Yes, and what happened? Did you . .
- Gl: We slept the whole day. We woke only toward evening and then wandered around the whole night. And that's how it went for several days and several nights.
- La: You didn't speak with anyone?
- Gl: We didn't speak with anyone. During the day, we stayed hidden somehow. We fed ourselves because it was August and there was harvest everywhere, just with the corn on the fields and with a bit of fruit, which we stole at night. That's how we wandered at night and slept by day.
- La: And you didn't go through villages?
- Gl: During that time, during the first period, we never went through the villages. Only on the second or third day, did we ask about the way – a woman who, as we could see, was all alone at a building, a farm building. And it is she who gave us the idea about what we should say to people. She looked at us and said, "You fled from a prisoner of war camp."
- La: In which language?
- Gl: In Polish (*says the sentence in Polish*). And that gave us the idea . .

Bob. No. 173 (GL 42)

- Gl: For the entire time, from the moment we turned around back then and saw

- Gl: Treblinka standing in flames at night, we had a wonderful feeling of joy, of a special kind of luck, of satisfaction, maybe of victory and a feeling, now we are human beings again.
- La: No fear?
- Gl: No longer any fear. That became our magic phrase then: "We fled from a prison camp." When we asked for help in Poland, we knew that we couldn't say that we were Jews. No, prisoners and fleeing from prison camp from the Germans. With that, everyone helped us.
- La: But not to say that you were Jews..
- Gl: But not to say we were Jews. And so we got close to Warsaw, swam across the Vistula River.
- La: Wisfa like Vistula.
- Gl: Weichsel (*the German name*), Wisfa and..
- La: You swam?
- Gl: And in that area.. swam. And in that area we were safer because we told ourselves, it's such a disgrace for the Nazis, for the SS, that they will try to make sure that the revolt of Treblinka doesn't get out. So, very few people will know anything about it.
- La: Very few Germans too.
- Gl: And so we, and so we kept going until we got more courageous and walked during the daytime too. And that was our downfall.
- La: Why?
- Gl: One day, one day, a forester stopped us in the woods pointing a rifle at us and, suspecting us to be partisans, (*took*) us

Gl: to a little city; the city was called (*Novemjatzym Natbelitzym ??*)...

La: A German forester?

Gl: A forester. I don't know if he was German or Polish. He spoke German as well as Polish. He took us to the police station in a little city. There were Poles all around. The name of the city was Novemjatzym Natbelitzym and they didn't really know what to do with us because we told a different story there. Immediately – we had prepared for that.

*(GL 43 - not notated in the German transcription)*

Gl: From Warsaw, we weren't sure where to go. We had seen too many people, as well as several soldiers. Then we asked some people working in the field, how we could continue on our way, of course, as prisoners fleeing from a prison camp. And they didn't know either how we could get across the Vistula, across the whole, crossing the whole area, for they told us that the whole area is occupied – German soldiers, check points, etc. everywhere. And then one of them came up with the idea that perhaps it was still possible to get through the, through the so-called shooting range, called "Polygon" in Polish, for no one dares to go there. There is still shooting going on there at times.

La: A German shooting range?

Gl: A German shooting range. And he showed us the direction and then we... there was barbed wire again; we climbed under the barbed wire and went across the shooting range.

- Gl: Suddenly the whole area changed. The lawn no longer green, but black; trees without leaves and not a normal color, but also black; everything as if burned with coal. From afar, we could hear shots and we had the image of being part of a fantasy-like fairy tale, in another world and we knew, if we cross this fairy tale area, maybe that will save us and (*lead us*) to a way to continue.
- La: That was at night or...
- Gl: It was in the late afternoon.
- La: And how many kilometers.
- Gl: And when we managed to get out – that was about four kilometers – when we managed to get out, we came to a little open area. Suddenly about 60 meters in front of us on the street, soldiers in green uniforms on horses appeared. But at the same time, we spotted a man, perhaps a farmer, who was chopping wood and we jumped over to him; Karl took an ax and I saw and then we pretended to work with him removing tree stumps from the ground, until the patrol rode by us. We told him that if he breathes a word, he'll get the ax on his head. And then we went on until we came to the Vistula, swam across the Vistula, until we were arrested in Zentralborn at a police station and put into a Polish prison. And there we told a different story,



Gl: which we had already prepared: We are Czech volunteers who volunteered for the so-called Todt Organization, which was an aid organization, and with the Todt Organization we were sent to Poland, where we dug ditches, did various work projects, construction, and were attacked by the partisans, who tortured and robbed us. That kind of story was very believable, very probable back then in Poland.

La: That was very smart.

Bob. No. 174 (the first part is silent, then the interview follows) (GL 44)

Gl: The Polish police didn't know what to do with us and told us we had to stay in a jail overnight and were to be transported the next day to a bigger city for interrogation. And then we were led into a jail toward evening. People were standing at the open doors. And when we were led into the middle of the street, some people yelled at the police, "Whom do you have there? Are those Jews to be shot?" And the policeman answered, "Yes, no, they may only be partisans."

La: That was progress.

Gl: And then that really confirmed for us that we could be everything under the sun, just not Jews. The next day we were deported to a bigger city. It was Thomachov Masowiekie.

Gl: And there weren't only Poles who interrogated us, those were Germans, so-called "ethnic Germans", that is, Germans who lived in Poland or Poles who were somehow related to Germans. And there we learned very quickly that we had to be bold and brazen. And when they yelled at us, we yelled back even louder. And always the same song: we're from the Todt Organization, attacked by partisans, robbed, abused, and we want to go home, otherwise we will lodge a complaint with our government, the then-Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. We sat in a jail for almost three weeks, which was converted from an old Jewish factory. In the small cells, up to 16 or 20 people were locked up. We could sleep only in shifts. We couldn't all sleep at once and the walls of the cell were spattered red with blood from vermin, bedbugs and such. One day, the door of the cell opened, and we were asked, "Who wants to go out and work?"

La: Who wants to...?

Gl: "Who wants to go out and work?" And then we both responded. We were led to the outskirts of the city, which was a place where not a stone was standing, not a single brick upon another. Everything destroyed. And there, we were to clean the bricks and pile them. And the policeman who was guarding us, told us that a Jewish ghetto was there once and the people were deported somewhere. We asked him if he knew to where. He said, no. But we knew! Then there were three or four more interrogations.

GI: And we found out that the whole jail was a big collection pot and there were political inmates, as well as farmers who had sold a kilo of meat on the black market. And we also learned ..

Bob. No. 175 (GL 45)

GI: Soon we also found out that from the big collection prison in Tomachov, there were only two ways out: either to Germany for forced labor or – that’s when we heard the word “Auschwitz” for the first time – or to Auschwitz. And for Auschwitz, trucks would come at night and people were loaded on and disappeared. That happened with several people from our cell too. And we also knew, depending on which paper, which color the prisoner signed, that you were sent either to Auschwitz or Germany. And did everything we could to sign the right papers, the papers with a transportation order for work to Germany, in the Reich. And we actually succeeded in doing that. We were guarded up to the border and on the border in the direction of Vienna, we were set free with the words, “So, you now have no other papers than a transportation order to a factory in Mannheim, and if you jump off on the way, then you’ll be done for at the next checkpoint.” And so one day, one morning, we got off in Vienna. That’s where we had to change trains and had to wait for the train to Mannheim. And there we saw someone in uniform get out of a train, and he had only one

Gl: arm. And then another who had only one leg. And as we were waiting for the train to Mannheim, we played a little game: we counted how many had only one leg or one arm or no legs and kept counting – so now it's six Germans in uniforms but with a total of only 3 arms and two legs. We got to Mannheim in the early morning, October 24, 1943. And the city seemed so totally foreign to us. Everywhere were ruins; everywhere there was rubble. The city was in the aftermath of a severe attack, and that was an opportune time for us. We went directly to the factory, the name of which we had on the transportation order. The factory was called Heinrich Lanz AG.

La: Heinrich Lanz?

Gl: Heinrich Lanz AG, Mannheim. The transportation order with that name was our only document. We came into the factory. The old man in a factory security officer uniform, who received us, didn't much care about us, gave us a factory identification card with the names which he got from the transportation order and told us to get a photo later.

La: What names did you...

Gl: They were Czech names and by coincidence, I took the name Massarek, a common Czech name.

La: Yes, Rudi Massarek.

Gl: And the factory security policeman told us where we would live. And then, with our tried and true tactic, we put up a fuss right away – that we had been sent here without clothing, without means, etc. Then we were sent to a storage area, a warehouse. We were told we would get things to wear there.

La: What kind of a factory was it?

Gl: The factory was originally a factory for agricultural machinery. But during the war, it was used for munitions. And down in the warehouse, a man suddenly threw a bundle of coats on the table. And we looked at the coats and counted. There were ten in each packet. And among them were short, quilt-lined coats, the so-called “gurtgas”, called gurtga in Polish, and Karl and I looked at each other and asked, “So the question is, did you sort and pack up these coats or did I or did David Pratt or just who did?”

La: Unbelievable!

Gl: Then we went in search of the residence where we were to live, to which we had been assigned. And that was a large residence for foreign workers outside of Mannheim. The place was called Seckenheim. And as we – it had been restaurant – and as we approached this house, suddenly we heard a song that we knew from Treblinka. It was a Ukrainian song. And when we entered this house, we saw

Gl: that we were in a big camp with Ukrainians who worked in Germany and who were actually similar to the Ukrainians whom we had already met. Only these were sent to work in Germany and the others over to Treblinka, and they're the ones who'd had to put on uniforms. We were led into the forge and were told to try to work in that heat. "In the heat" meant the smelting ovens and the drop hammers. And that's where we stayed. And after a few months, we were transferred from this camp, falsified our papers so that it looked as if we had come to Germany on our own free will, not as forced laborers. On the basis of the factory ID cards, we got a police registration. And this police registration and the factory ID were our only documents. At every checkpoint, and there were...

Bob. No. 176 (GL 46)

Gl: And when we heard the Ukrainian song, we didn't really hear the song itself. We heard all of Treblinka. And it went something like this: (*sings the song in Ukrainian*) and so on.

La: Encore... again.

Gl: A different song?

La: Yes.

Gl: (*Sings another song in Ukrainian.*)

La: Do you know what it means?

Gl: Yes. It's very simple. That last, that last song: "Up there on the mountain camped, stood, camped gypsies and among them a young female gypsy. She was standing there and "toulala" and was deep in thought. Stood there and thought and thought and waited." That's all.

After a short time, we moved and took a private apartment. Several months passed. And we were, let's say, respected people, loyal Czechs, who voluntarily registered for work in the German Reich and who were doing work there. And because we were doing one of the hardest kinds of work...

Cassette 15 – Side B

Bob. No. 176 (GL 46) (*video has no break*)

Gl: at the smelting ovens at temperatures of 70 degrees Centigrade, we received the so-called "heavy work ration cards" for food, and the food we didn't get with these cards, we got from our German girlfriends.

La: Yes, yes, there were girlfriends?

Gl: There were many girlfriends.

La: Many?

Gl: Very many.

La: And, it's hard to ask this, did you hate...?

Gl: Actually...

La: these Germans or these girlfriends?

Gl: Actually not. Actually not because the surprise for us was that we met people everywhere who were different from the SS, whom we knew in Treblinka. The Germans, with whom I worked in the factory, were people like all others. They saved my life more than once or protected me from injuries, and I them as well.

La: Did these people talk about the Jews?

Gl: Never. Never. One time, Sepp Hanf, my foreman, told me how it actually was and how his son had to register with the "Waffen SS", for otherwise, he would not have been able to get a job. But we never dared to talk about the Jews. And our other surprise was that nowhere did we see signs that said, "Entry to Jews forbidden"; or that we no longer saw people with the Jewish star.

La: There were no more Jews.

Gl: And the entire city of Mannheim was "judenfrei", emptied of Jews.

La: Yes, of course.

Gl: And that's when we thought that all the Jews had already been killed somewhere in Treblinka or elsewhere, and that we are, how shall I say it, the only ones of our kind.

La: You thought that you, you were, that you were the bearers of this secret?

Gl: And that we are the only bearers of these secrets of death and murder of almost one million people. I remember



Gl: the first time we went to the cinema. Just the idea that we could go into a cinema after Treblinka was something fantastic. The film was “The Baron of Münchhausen” with Hans Albers. And I watched him flying on the cannonball and then to the moon. And I had the sense that not he, Hans Albers, Baron of Münchhausen, was flying to the moon, but that I’m already on the moon.

La: Yes.

Gl: Then too, we were buried twice by air raids and survived a lot of air raids and were happy about every bomb that came down. During inspections we always showed our factory ID with photo, the police registration, and said that our papers are on file at the factory. And then later after a big bomb hit the police headquarters building, we always said that our papers were on file at the police headquarters. And so we became safer and safer with the approaching end of war and the approaching Allied armies. And that’s how we got to March ‘45. The factory was bombed out. You couldn’t work in the factory anymore. The entire city was almost devoid of human beings. You could already hear the artillery of the approaching American army. And the only food, well, not really food, but for allaying hunger, the only means...

Bob. No. 177 (GL 47)

Gl: And the only means to allay our hunger in the almost deserted city was the wine in the cellars. And so we quenched

Gl: our hunger with wine and drank more and more almost to unconsciousness. And in this condition, without really knowing it, we went over the German line and met American soldiers. And they wanted to shoot us. And then one of them could tell that we were talking in a Slavic language with each other. And he came from a Polish family, this American soldier, and could still understand a bit of the language. So we... so that's how the Americans actually liberated us.

La: Did you talk about Treblinka?

Gl: Later the Americans cross-examined us for two days and at the end of the second day, we were led to a colonel, to an American colonel and he said, "Yes, we believe your whole story. But now one more thing: Are you able to pray in Hebrew?" And then I...

La: He was a Jew?

Gl: Apparently he was a Jew. Then I remembered the only thing I used to hear on Saturday evenings from my second father – the prayer, the Sabbath prayer about bread and wine. And I probably remembered it because in it, you thank the dear Lord not only for the bread but also for the wine. And that's what I recited for the American colonel, and then he said, "Yes, now we're done."

La: Can you...

Gl: The prayer?

La: Yes.

Gl: *(prays in Hebrew)* “Baruch..”

And that is the whole story.

La: Did you take money, when you fled Treblinka?

Gl: On the eve of the revolt, two of the Gold Jews came to us, Saul Sauer and Willi Fürst, and gave each of us two diamonds in case we, in case that a miracle were to happen and that we might save ourselves, and that we would actually get out of Treblinka. And we carried these two diamonds with us the whole time. I always carried a little shaving kit with me, a little etui, which I had found in Treblinka among the piles of things. And in the soap, in the shaving soap, we buried and hid these diamonds. But we said to ourselves, that these diamonds shouldn't be a means of survival. We should survive without the riches of Treblinka, if we should be so lucky. And so we saved these diamonds and from the diamonds we had rings made for our wives. And Karl's wife and my wife wear rings with these diamonds.

La: You never sold them?

Gl: Never. Never. And we never had, we also never had much money.

La: It's clear that you, you..

Gl: That's the shaving kit, the very soap. *(Shows Lanzmann the items.)* This soap is still from Treblinka, the etui too. Probably that's the only object which remains to this day from the 800,000 people.

Gl: And that is the ring my wife wears. (*Shows the diamond ring.*)

La: (*Takes the ring*) It's very, very beautiful (*takes the etui*) and that is the etui...

Continuation of Bob. No. 177 (GL 48)

La: To this day, Suchomel remembers with amazement the so-called Czech group.

Gl: Yes, the Czech group, the little Czech group was actually something special for a long time in Treblinka. It took a long time till we got along with the other Jews. We came from a different region, spoke a different language, and understood neither Polish nor Yiddish. Most of us were athletes, were well-built and, I must say, the SS men always had what you might call respect for us, especially for Jelo Bloch and for Rudi Massarek. Besides, it's an unusual story with Rudi Massarek. He was actually only a half-Jew. I knew him from Prague and our families had been friends. He married a Jewish woman who came from Austria and then he volunteered for the transport with his wife. And Rudi Massarek was blond. And in Treblinka, of all the people – SS man, Ukrainians – who looked truly Aryan, it was Rudi Massarek. You could say that Rudi Massarek was a Germanic type. Like an archetype. And maybe because of that, the SS had...

Bob. No. 178 (GL 49)

Gl: In the discussions after the war about Treblinka, Auschwitz, as well as after the airing of the TV series “Holocaust”, the question continually arose, “Yes, why didn’t you defend yourselves, why didn’t you put up more resistance? Why were you such cowards?”

La: No, no, no, no, no.

(GL 50)

Gl: Somehow the one who was particularly fond of us among the SS men was Corporal Suchomel. And especially for Rudi Massarek. Maybe because Suchomel was a master tailor and Rudi was also a professional tailor, and thus, Rudi Massarek was assigned to the tailor shop toward the end. And there he made shirts for the SS and especially for Suchomel. We were all better trained, but I have to add that we also had had better nutrition, and we came from Czechoslovakia, from Bohemia, from better conditions than the Jews from Poland.

La: Yes, but yesterday you spoke about the Polish Jews. And I want to ask you, if you had pity on these Polish Jews who came in the transports, these Poles...

Gl: They were, the Polish Jews were a completely foreign entity for me, and never in my life had I seen so many pathetic people, so much poverty among the people who were deported to Treblinka from Poland and the Russian areas! Never in my life!

La: Why?

Gl: Only in Treblinka did I become aware of what

- Gl: Polish Jewry was and under what conditions they had to live.
- La: For instance, in Treblinka did you hear anything about the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance, the Uprising?
- Gl: We heard about that . .
- La: . . . in Treblinka?
- Gl: . . . in Treblinka. The news made it to Treblinka. And then the rest of the liquidated Warsaw Ghetto came, the ones who were captured. And they were the ones who actually told us that “Now it’s up to up to you; now it’s your turn.”
- La: Most of the worker Jews in Treblinka, most of them were Polish Jews.
- Gl: Most of them were, were Polish Jews. There were about eighteen Czechs in Treblinka . .
- La: Eighteen, not more?
- Gl: Not more and later even fewer because some of them died during the typhus epidemic. There were three or five Germans, German Jews, and all the others were Polish Jews. From Warsaw, from Kietrz, from Schwetz, from Denblin, Lublin, Grodno, Bialystok, etc.
- La: But people like Galewski, like David Bart, like David Pratt, like . . ?
- Gl: David Pratt was from Tschenstochau. Galewski was, I think, from Warsaw. Those were intelligent people. Galewski was

- Gl: an engineer. There were very intelligent people among them, on the one hand. There were also rich people among them. You could see that. But the majority, they were such poor people and they were Jews. Never in my life have I seen Jews who were as poor as those deported to Treblinka!
- La: Yes, they had a few dollars in their clothes, but what ..
- Gl: ... apart from that, they were poor.
- La: And what can you say about the connection of these people about maintaining the whole tradition? And for yourself too?
- Gl: I'd like to explain that in a different way perhaps. I have an explanation about that. I'd like to come back now to the many discussions that were held especially after the airing of the TV series "Holocaust". There were also official discussions. And the question that is continually raised is: "Yes, how could that have happened?" Everyone is aware especially of the question, "Why did they let themselves be led to the slaughterhouse, to be slaughtered like sheep?" What I noticed is this: The concept of cowardice nowadays, somehow the concept of cowardice is connected with the inability to kill. On the other hand, the concepts of courage and heroism are somehow connected with the ability, with the human ability to kill other human beings.
- La: Yes.
- Gl: And I saw it and experienced it especially with the Polish Jews. They were incapable of acts of violence. They were raised with, they grew up with the Talmud and the Torah. And if you connect the cowardice with the inability to kill, then these

Gl: Jews were incapable of acts of violence, incapable of killing others; so in that sense they were cowardly. Yes.

La: And you?

Gl: Hard to say. I had to try really, really hard to bring myself to be violent. And, especially back then during our flight, we had to be violent. But there's always a price to pay and, I would say, I personally am do not easily engage in violence. And I'm probably incapable of killing too.

La: I think that is the big difference.

Gl: That's the point. That's the point.

Bob. No. 179 (GL 51)

Gl: One day Second Lieutenant Kurt Franz, for his amusement – that was the usual thing with him - came up with the Shit Kapos. Probably in his estimation we were on the latrine too long. At one of the roll calls, he selected one, a pathetic type, a little Jew (*uses the diminutive German term, "Jüdlein"*)...

La: A little Jew?

Gl: ...with a bald head. Someone who had probably never in his life made his hand into a fist. And they put a caftan on him, a rabbi cap on his head – things that were found in the transports – and a whip in his hand and around his neck a big alarm clock.

La: An alarm clock?

Gl: A big kitchen timer. "And now you are the big boss, the big boss of the latrine", Kurt Franz said to him.

Stop, stop (*to the camera*).



Bob. No. 179 (GL 52)

Gl: “So, and now you are the big boss of the latrine. No one in the latrines can talk back to you. And if someone sits on the latrine more than two minutes, then you have to drive him out with the whip. And there will be a sign on the latrines: “Shit for two minutes, whoever shits slower, will be driven out.” (*The lines rhyme in German.*) And there was another latrine in the camp, and for this other latrine, Franz, with other SS, selected another Shit Kapo. That one was different from the little one. He was big, but clumsy. Everything about him was somehow loose, just hanging there, and it seemed as if he wasn’t right in the head. And he was initiated in the same way as the little Shit Kapo – caftan, a rabbi cap on his head, whip in his hand and in addition, and that was the peculiarity of this big Shit Kapo, the Ukrainians had uncovered somewhere in the transport a wide belt, a leather belt, for the waist, around the hips. None of the SS could foresee that this big Shit Kapo would play an important role in the revolt.

La: Cut (*to the camera*).

Bob. No. 179 (GL 53)

La: How old were the so-called Shit Kapos?

Gl: That’s hard to say. Maybe 30. Around 30 or so.

La: Yes.

Gl: And there on the latrine, where the big Shit Kapo was in charge,

- Gl: a lot of conversations took place which (*allowed*) for the preparation of the revolt . .
- La: Was it the headquarters?
- Gl: It was actually the headquarters, the general staff, or a place where the general staff of the revolt met. And then the big Shit Kapo didn't let anyone in, of course, and raged with his whip, which pleased the SS men. That's the kind of guy he was.
- La: He didn't survive?
- Gl: He didn't survive. And in his leather waistband, his belt, in the belt, golden coins were sewn in, one beside the other, and they were intended possibly to bribe the Ukrainians and to buy weapons.
- La: And they were always dressed in this caftan, with the rabbi's . .
- Gl: They always had, they always had to wear this caftan and rabbi's cap.
- La: That's terrible.
- Gl: And once when I was there . .
- La: Were they religious Jews?
- Gl: Yes, the big Shit Kapo was that kind of guy. Once I heard him say, "Yes, it's like this with me: my Mama and my, my, my, my Mama and my father knew why they gave me this gestalt, this ugly face. And why they made me so ugly. So I will never get married, so I will never have children, whom I'll have to cry for here in Treblinka. And only here in Treblinka, I've found my rightful place.

Gl: Here I am a Shit Kapo. And Shit Kapo, that's a good occupation. It will remain after the war. And then I will be the Shit Kapo until they all shit on themselves." The big Shit Kapo. What happened to him, I don't know.

When I talk about Treblinka today or even hear the word, then I see certain people, certain individuals. It's Kurt Franz, the SS Second Lieutenant, called Lalka, meaning "doll" in Polish. That's how he was built. I see other SS men. I see my fellow prisoners, the Jews, and among them I always, always see the big Shit Kapo.

(GL 54)

La: Were there many Torahs, many rituals, Jewish items, Talich, etc. that arrived in Treblinka?

Gl: There weren't that many Torahs and caftans and rabbi caps. Those were exceptions. The transports from the West brought practically none of those, and from the East, actually not either, because, especially no Torahs, I saw no Torahs in Treblinka. I suspect they were such valuable items that they were probably hidden. Prayer shawls were very few, but that was something that in Treblinka was garbage. Prayer shawls and religious items were the only things that weren't sorted and were burned in the hospital. So, in the hospital, people were burned, the sick from the transports and prayer shawls and everything that had Hebrew writing. And so,

Gl: actually for a long time after the transports were liquidated, the fire in the hospital was still burning.

La: Do you have an explanation?

Gl: *(no video)* The explanation is again that the SS wanted to destroy everything that could remind anyone of Judaism, so it was the same as the removal of the Jewish star. The Jewish star was also garbage in Treblinka. Those were burned too. All those things were... that was garbage in Treblinka. They were, this garbage was brought over to the hospital, thrown into the trench and on the fire.

Gl: Meaning destruction of body and soul.

La: Yes. Well, just the way the bodies were burned there, so too, the spiritual, if we went to call it that, was burned.

Gl: Very good, very good.