

-TITLE-HENRY BULAWKO

-I_DATE-FEBRUARY 10, 1991

-SOURCE-JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

-RESTRICTIONS-

-SOUND_QUALITY-EXCELLENT

-IMAGE_QUALITY-VERY GOOD

-DURATION-

-LANGUAGES-FRENCH

-KEY_SEGMENT-

-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-

-PERSONAL_NAME-

-CORPORATE_NAME-

-KEY_WORDS-

-NOTES-

-CONTENTS-

00.00.00 Born November 25, 1918 in Lida (Byelorussia), Lithuania. He had five brothers and sisters. Family arrived in Paris in 1925, responding to French call for laborers. During the occupation, a sister, her child and her husband were deported. His father had died in 1935; his mother went into hiding, and the other, dispersed. His family in France mostly survived the occupation; not so for his relatives in Lithuania.

00.01.95 Henry's father was a rabbi in Lithuania and in Paris, where he worked in two synagogues. His mother worked in the home. The family was poor, so all the children worked. The religious life of the family was formal, and there was no pressure to assimilate into the French lifestyle. Foreign workers were welcomed in Paris and Jews had their own community.

00.05.00 Problems began with the economic depression of 1929. Unemployment began to rise and Fascist groups (including National Socialism) began to form. Campaigns were undertaken against immigrant workers.

00.06.45 The large Jewish community closed in upon itself to maintain its identity. Emphasis was on culture more than religion, yet there was no conflict between daily life and religious life. Henry stated that Jewish life was intense, but its religious aspect was not prominent. Within the community, one could live in Paris without speaking French.

00.08.30 Henry attended a Jewish school in Paris, which was the only school in the city where one did not go to classes on Saturday. He saw no anti-Semitism until the age of 14 or 15.

00.09.20 The National Socialist youth movement (NICRA, ph.) was led by Bernard LeKasch (ph.) Weekly street fights made him aware of the ideological conflict. Henry described a developing and deepening of political consciousness with his engagement in the fights.

00.11.22 Henry wanted to get involved with the Communists, but it was risky for a foreigner to do so. He was disappointed with Israel, which he called "an abstraction". He explained that Jews were attracted to communism because of its ideology and activity against fascism. Within the ranks of the Jewish Communists, there were ideological differences between the radicals, or militants, and the moderates.

00.17.52 The false mobilization in 1938 created confusion in over the war. Demobilization followed by relief. Germany was showing propaganda on TV that emphasized its military strength. Following the Munich accords, there was ideological confusion within France. Jews were impressed by the Communists denunciation of the accords. Henry was active in the socialism youth organization.

00.20.30 Following the declaration of war, Henry was not asked to mobilize. He tried to enlist and was refused because he had been recently naturalized. On June 14, the day of the German invasion, he left Paris with his family. Everywhere there were crowds of refugees, incessant bombings and German soldiers. They returned to Paris, not knowing where else to go.

00.24.15 English resume (not comprehensive).

00.26.30 Jews stayed in Paris because they trusted the French authorities; German propaganda made them more receptive to occupation. There was no fear everyone adapted.

00.30.30 A group of 50-60 Jewish youth united to decide what to do. Since the papers were in collaboration with the Nazis, they felt cut off from the world. Frustrated with the meetings, Henry sought out his father's friends in the Jewish community. In the fall of 1940, the chief rabbi of Paris [Giberdet, ph.] gave him a name to contact.

00.33.00 Members of the Socialist Youth were arrested. Henry's group helped them as much as they could by bringing food and aiding their families.

00.34.10 Henry began to organize to help Jews subsist. He collected money for families with imprisoned husbands and made plans to hide children. He also began to print false identification cards that would allow Jews to escape to the Free Zone in the South. He estimates having made about 1200 cards, obtaining the necessary supplies through connections, theft, etc. He feels the results of his work were positive.

00.39.50 Henry's group contacted the Communists for advice on further resistance activities. They tried to convince Jewish collaborators to stop; they convinced people to leave Paris; they distributed tracts advising Jews not to present themselves when called before the authorities. In the beginning of 1942, they began looking for still more effective ways of resistance, since

Jews were not leaving.

00.43.20 Combat groups were forming. Henry joined a brigade of socialists who approached the Communists. The latter had arms and experience from the Spanish Civil War. Henry did not want to join the Communists, so he could not get arms. He admits to being naive and lacking practical experience. The resistance became "communized", but clandestine armed resistance needed central direction.

00.45.45 English resume.

00.47.00 Henry describes the phenomenon of Jews who presented themselves when summoned. It was both an issue of obedience and pride. Those who did not were in danger of being turned in by neighbors. Certain ones were able to avoid persecution, and of them, some had kept their radios, which were demanded by the Germans.

00.49.05 Henry describes the joy he felt when he heard on the radio that Germany invaded Russia. He felt certain that the German army would be swiftly defeated. He and his companions were shattered by the early Nazi victories. 1941 was the beginning of a very difficult period of reduced enthusiasm and passion. He emphasized that for what they needed to know, the radio was insufficient; its information was "not real".

00.51.35 English resume

00.54.00 In 1942, he did not know about the ghetto, or camps in the rest of Europe. He learned about the Warsaw ghetto in 1943 from a tract printed by Polish Jew,. When he heard about massacres, he thought of pogroms, not camps.

00.55.34 The radio did not help in clarifying information. Even if the radio had mentioned ghettos or extermination camps, Henry is not sure he would have understood or believed it. He could only warn people against deportation without telling them why.

00.57.09 Henry reflects on the moral problems of resistance. How could one take an 18 year-old son from his family, tell him to drop everything and join the Communists? One's loyalty was to the family before the cause. When his friends, upon the arrest of their father, asked for ID cards so they could flee with their mother, he gave them to them. He did not want to play censor, deciding who should stay and fight and who should go. Besides, they would have left anyway.

00.58.50 The resistance movement lacked discipline. If their family was still in Paris, resistance members would frequently return home to check on them. Henry, who had moved to a different part of Paris and been given a different name, returned twice a week to see his mother. The difference between Jews and the Communists was that Jews had no history of militant activity.

01.00.00 The non-Jewish resistance (and radio) spoke little of Jewish problems, which were accessory to occupation. Therefore, each Jewish family had to "improvise": finding a family to shelter them, avoiding the police, etc. The struggle was individual and familial.
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