

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Max Haber  
August 18, 1990  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Max Haber, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on August 18, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview cannot be used for sale in the Museum Shop. The interview cannot be used by a third party for creation of a work for commercial sale.

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## MAX HABER

### August 18, 1990

- A: Okay. Now we're on tape. Would you tell me your name please?
- Q: My name is Max Haber. I was born on the 31st of December, 1904, in Essen on the Ruhr [River], Germany.
- A: Tell me about your childhood as you were growing up.
- Q: My childhood up to the First World War, which started when I was 9 years old, was a nice one, a happy one. In fact, my father took us and my uncle to visit our grandparents in Kolomier. In other words, in those 5 weeks that I was there, I met my grandparents and I still remember when we went back to Germany, he asked me, "What is your name?" I said, "Max. Max." He said, "No." He said, "Moshe." Uh...then he said, this what I wanted to know from you. When you go to Germany, I'd like to stay a good Jew. And I think my father did everything and myself to follow his advice. After then during the war time, we were very hungry. We did have very little to eat. There was a blockade against Germany. My father was in the army, and my brother was taken a little bit later into the army. But they came back in 1918, 19 and life was normal. I learned my trade. Was an \_\_\_ export refinery for non-ferrous metals. We had different...we had different...uh...uh... departments and I chose to be in the metal department. By the way this trade I continued here when I came to Chicago.
- Q: Max. Excuse me. Tell me about...before we go on, being a Jew, being raised as a Jew. Uh...What kind of school did you go to?
- A: The school I attended was an orthodox school, real orthodox school, \_\_\_\_\_. Our teachers were good Germans, but they were good Jews too. We were very knowledgeable. The teacher that taught us math or geography was at the same time teacher \_\_\_\_\_. After finishing 5th school, it was not very hard to get a position as a apprentice. So you had to work 3 years with a little pay in order to become a businessman. Interestingly as you asked me these questions, something comes to mind. At the Christmas time, after I was 1 and a half years employed, I was called...little bit over 1 and a half years, I was called to the personnel office and I was told...up to now they called you Haber, Haber. From now on your name will be Herr Haber. We let you... consider you that you finish your apprenticeship, but under the conditions that you stay with us the full 3 years, but your salary will be as of a full-fledged...uh...uh...employee. This reminds me about how Germany has changed. He was not Jewish. He was very friendly. He was knowing that I was Jewish because I did not work on Saturday. I came Sundays. Sunday morning half a day, and Saturday I had off. Well, after a certain years being offering them a buyer...
- Q: In what city?
- A: In Homburg. Everything is Homburg. Everything is Homburg because as...uh...when I was

still a baby, we moved from Essen on the Ruhr to Homburg. In...uh...I became a businessman and was even for myself in business until I had to give it up when Hitler came to power. And end of 1933, my father having passed away and buried now in Homburg, I remained with my mother because my brother and my sister lived already in the East. My...my sister married and my brother had to...in order to be...to be a doctor, practicing doctor, had to go there where he was born. He was...when he was born, it was Austria, as I mentioned before, but it became after the first world...world war, Polish territory. In 1933, I tried to go to the United States. I had relatives there, an uncle, brother of my mother, and cousins. It was...I did not get an answer so that means I could not get any papers and go here...go to the United States. So I decided in Germany I cannot stay and I went to Poland because my brother and sister lived there and they said there are three and a million Jews live. You can live too. When I came to Kolomier where my sister lived, was a city not far away from Rumania border, and there I could make a living because I needed a territory where there was industry. So I figured it out and I went to Katowice. For two reasons. First of all, there was the so-called Polish industry, and the other one was that I did not speak Polish and I could help myself with a lot of German and a little Polish. And I even went to an evening school to know a little bit more of the language. I made a living, but in 39 we heard, in May 39, that there will come probably a war between Germany and Poland. So I decided to get out of Poland. But, as I mentioned, before you couldn't go anywhere. I met a young man on the street and I told him we had to talk. And I told him I think we get...have to get out from here, somewhere. So he just said..uh...(clearing throat) well, you have a Polish passport, you cannot go anywhere. You have the will to go, but nobody lets you in. A few weeks later I joined the \_\_\_\_\_ party on advice of friends and they told me that they will have an illegal transport to Palestine some day in August. I joined them, paid in, and we went in this transport to the Rumanian border. In order to be told we cannot get farther...farther, at that time the English Ambassador to Rumania told the Rumanians to withdraw the visa to go through Rumania because they don't want illegal ships to come on the...on the...on the borders of the Arab Palestine.

Q: Tell me about the people on the transport and tell me about...I believe you met Begin.

A: I did not meet Begin because he kept himself incognito. He was afraid because the transport was not...was not legal. I...he was pointed out later to me when we went...got through that this is Begin. This was in August of 1939, and my sister lived in that city. I came back and I had nowhere to go. And when the war broke out I was in Kolomier, the city that my sister lived and my mother was there because I left her there because I was going to Palestine. We were very surprised when on the 1st of September the war broke out and nobody came to the help of the Poles. Neither the English nor the French. We know that 2 days later, they declared war against Germany, but no help. And we thought, "Where is Russia?" Nobody came to help, and as you all...as everybody knows, Poland was overrun by the Germans and in 14 days Warsaw was taken. My brother who was at that time in Krakau, and on the way to Warsaw because he hoped that there will be the least possibility that the Germans will get it, but then he saw that in...in 10 days, they were already close to Warsaw they changed their

routine and went to the Rumanian border and so we were reunited in Kolomier altogether the whole family once more except my father who was not anymore alive. Thirteen or 14 days later the Russians came in. And I remember so well because they came with tanks, slowly in, and every second tank did not function. A few days later we saw trains going day and night out of Poland with everything they could get...put their hands on and they were at that time making the Ribenthrow-Molotov Pact and felt obliged to give them food and assistance to kill everything that is...uh...capitalist. Soon thereafter you had to stand for bread in line. Everything was...you couldn't get. The businessmen were forced to sell everything they had for \_\_\_\_\_ was declared as null, as...of no value. And when I looked at all these things, I decided I will get out from here whatever. And so my brother-in-law joined me and we went to the border and hoped to help to get to the Rumanian side. Instead, I landed in Russian hands because the people that wanted to bring us over there, agents of the Russians. I went to several prisons, smaller prisons.

Q: Wait a second. Tell us what happened when you fell into Russian hands. What did that mean? How were you handled? What did they say to you?

A: I went to several prisons, smaller prisons, and within 8 or 10 days...I don't remember exactly, we were back in Kolomier in the prison of Kolomier. There I was interrogated twice at midnight. But I made it very simple. I said, "I am a Jew from Germany and I lived in Poland because I could not stay anymore in Germany and here in Poland I was not even at home and I wanted to go to Palestine. That was, of course, for the Russians already a prison term of 5 to 10 years because as a Zionist you were already not considered a nice person. Then from there we went to Stanislaw...Stanislaw, of course, and from there to Limburg \_\_, and there most of the people once more interrogated I was not. I had a clear case. A Zionist! A man who didn't like Russia. We came to...to free them and to make a better life for them and he wanted to get away. And according to that, they gave me paragraph 58, which means they cannot be anything worse than as a politician...uh...political prisoner. That's what they had in the paragraph 58. From there, we were several months in prison. Of course, the prison was not clean. We got a lot of lice and...uh...the food was not good, but later on this was good food. Then we were taken to Kiev from there. It took us about 10 to 15 days to get there. I don't know exactly the days.

Q: How were you taken and what...

A: In cars, in...in animal cars. Uh...42 a car. Uh...It was the 18th of March 1940 that we arrived in Kiev. Uh...There we were taken into an office and we thought of course, it would be right to take the hat off, and he told us in Russian, "This is not a church. You can have the hat on." He had his on. But we slept on the floor, on a stone floor and they didn't give us anything to eat until we went into a cell. That was about 24 hours later. There they started to get...not to interrogate us and that...this...this room was made for eight people and we were 40. The few strong people slept on the bed. The other slept on the floor. When we came, there was a Russian man in there, and they took him pretty soon out because a big part of the people

were Jews that fled Poland from the other side where the Germans came and they took them prison...as prisoner anyhow if they didn't do anything either. Then 2 days later there was an other man with us who was Jewish. His name was Mesha. He was very friendly and we...he said...we asked him what are you here doing...doing here. He said, "I am a leather cutter and I stole a little bit of leather. He gave me 2 years." But he used to get packages. He used to be very friendly, and he heard what we talked and up to the time when Paris fell to the Germans that means somewhere in June or July...don't know exactly, we didn't know that people that are interrogators take nights out and I was not, as I told you before, I had a clear case what I am. A Zionist! They told me there were a lot of papers in different languages. He was very friendly...gave him cigarettes. \_\_\_\_\_ in German. And...uh...looked to...looked to it that they should see that Paris was taken by the Germans. So he told them, "You see. Now the capitalist are gone. Now we will fight the fascist. That is our purpose." So he came back to the cells and I...I...I heard from anybody of them...from all of them the same...the same news. And in August 1940 they took us all down in the former church of the Kiev prison and told us we will judge...be judged now and get the sentence. I was called and there were three men sitting there, not dressed very nicely. , proud of it and said in Russian language. May I say it in language which I talk you know? \_\_\_\_\_. That means, "The judges of three gave you 5 years." When I asked \_\_\_\_\_ for what? The answer was .. "You will find out." \_\_\_\_\_. You will go into a camp and then you don't withstand it, you just die like an animal. We got double rations and prepared for the transport to the camp. Uh...Somewhere beginning of September we were taken out and went to a place not far away from...from Kiev farther north I imagine. It was north. And there we were prepared to be shipped to different kind of places. Chernigov was the name of that place and...uh...there was a woman doctor, a Jewish woman doctor and I told her that I suffer from...uh...ulcers. "Oh," she said, "Everybody has here something and nobody wants to go to work." And that was it. But 2 or 3 days later, a transport went and two or three of us stayed. Was not sent out. Was not for the better. Was not for the worst. We were retransported to Kiev. And there we went into that big church that was not any more a church in the prison, and we were among real, real thieves, murderers...6, 7 of us. There it happened to become Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. How did we know it? By the moon. Jews have the moon calendar. We were knowing when it was full moon and so on and so on and so on. But we had...we were not 10 people, and we were in one corner. All of a sudden that afternoon, the day before Rosh Hashanah, they threw us in three young men like...looking like Hasidim with the beard, with Patots, and they came from the ditches, and they were originally from Galicja, taken prisoners and were kept in the ditches but were now prepared to go with the transport probably with us a new transport into concentration camp. The man that was on the table who was directing everybody, the main man, the chief of the criminals, wanted to know who they are. They considered them like angels. He never saw people like that and he wanted to know from us and we told them we have a holiday and they were sent to us and so they made peace with us and did not touch us, did not bother us for 2 days...the criminals. But before that they took...when I had...uh...handkerchief or whatever I had, they took everything from us because they had nothing and everything was dealt with like on the black market. You exchanged tobacco for this or that. Between Rosh Hashanah Yom Kippur, we

are put in a train. The train was not...uh...a car...uh...animal car, but it had grates and it was similar to the first class of prewar Germany. Hard seats and outside was both sides soldier with a gun, and we were transported through Russian Europe. To show it is not so bad, we were in a train like human beings. But as soon as we arrived...as we reached the \_\_\_\_\_, we were put again in those wonderful trains and it took us several weeks. On the transport there, there was a day when we didn't get...more than a day when we didn't get nothing to eat. The food was handed out every morning to the leader of that car...car...of that...uh...of that...uh...animal car. And he was a Pole...he was...uh... uh...a criminal. They never put a politician in charge. He had a dirty handkerchief which he used for everything and in that they gave him this little bit of sugar. 40 people got so and so much sugar, and it was measured in a...in a little...uh...match box. A little match box was measured out to everybody. And then we got the bread. The bread was good at that time. When you were hungry, you could eat it, and it was 5 or 6 hundred grams. Little bit more than a pound of bread. We arrived in Yetsevel. It was called Yetsevel. That was originally a point where the first prisoners came. It was only a forest. They got...all they got was a saw and a hammer, whatever, to build there a station. They lived in...under 30 degrees...they lived in...in tents until it was built. And that was the place that the Germans used to call the umschlagplatz, which is the same thing. And there we were gathered together. And when we arrived...of course, hungry, exhausted, with lice, first met a Jewish fellow and he was in charge of the sauerkraut...of the sauerkraut...uh...basins. There were big basins and that was...this...this place has mostly cabbage. And so they made that as a diet for prisoners. The bread, the cabbage, and the...and the cabbage soup day in and day out. But we didn't stay very long there. He told us it's very bad here and he... uh...managed to see already a month here but then they sent you away it's so bad there and somebody come back he...he cannot tell us anything good. So the next morning, we went out...it was about...was not more than 11 or 12 kilometers from there and we went on the railroad siding because there was no street. There was no other way but by the railroad went once a day or went every two days, to and back on the same...same...uh...same...uh...same...same thing. When we arrived in that...that camp, by the name of Meuselwitz. In my opinion there were there not less than 3 or 4 thousand prisoners. There were already Polish prisoners there or Jewish prisoners there and first when we came we were put in a barrack or call it...uh...to... to...where...where you...where you live and where you sleep, and that was like made out of a few boards and the wind was blowing in. In the middle was a big furnace, iron furnace and the prisoners came home wet from work and everybody and I...I...around the oven warmed himself and dried his clothes. Otherwise, it was cold all...all over and the only light that was there was about in a big, big place, a little about maybe... The next day we had to go to work. How do we get the soup? You don't get anything in Russia. Don't get the fork. Don't get the spoon. You have to see that you get it, that you make it yourself. So there were prisons who said I will first go and then you...give it to you when it's empty and you go. But you have to be in time outside to go to work. They made spoons out of wood and the can that was an empty American can...uh...meat was eventually in...packed in, and that was made to...uh...to a can where you received your...your soup. Standing in line, you got your soup and we went out early at 6 o'clock in the morning and music was playing...prisoners. And they played. When they saw there was a lot of Jews,

they played Jewish songs. Like \_\_\_\_\_. When we went out to work, we went over 1 and a half hours til we got there where I work was. And what was the work? To cut trees. Not with electric cuts, but two men with a saw and others had to transport it and so on and so on. I was not able to do that work and I was when I came back I did a little something in order not to go to prison...in prison and I got...uh...300 grams of bread. Others got 700 because they worked good. But it showed after them that after 2 years of that kind of work that I was better off than the others because they got more bread, but they died too from the hard work, and I somehow survived. I became so thin. I lost a lot of weight. You could see all my ribs. In June of 1900...of 1941 when the Germans attacked Russia, we heard it in the camp on loud speaker and the...uh...all the foreigners were told they're going to freedom if they are Polish citizens because of the attack on...on...on Russia. I was not called. Most of them were called, and every day so and so many disappeared to so-called freedom. Three months later, I was called. Was one of those cases that they didn't know what to do with. I was caught...taken on Polish territory, had relatives that were Polish...Polish citizens and I, on the other hand, was German born. So I was sent back and was...that was the most terrible time in my life. I was beaten up by other prisoners because they thought I was too...too happy to go...to go away but I was still one of them. These prisoners were...had the same faces like \_\_\_\_ today and Armenian but were there and accused Jews that because of us they are here. The Jews are the leaders of communism and as I am a Jew, they beat me up. When I see today on television those faces, these were the people they did it to me. In the camp the man that cut the bread was sentenced in 37 to 10 years because he was \_\_\_\_\_. There was a time when Stalin cleaned out and then he found somebody \_\_\_\_\_ and got 10 years. I got only 5 years. The doctor was a \_\_\_\_\_, and the other doctor was a \_\_\_\_\_. And when there came Yom Kippur I went to the doctor and I told him I cannot go to work. That was the first Yom Kippur I...the first Yom Kippur I was in the train. The second one I had to go to work, but I did not work, but when I came back I got 10 days prison in prison for not working. So I spent 10 days with young boys age 10 to 14 or 16 who played cards on my rags that I had there and they made me sleep at the latrine. I had to take it out, and I got my bread...instead of picking it up I got it 3 hours later and the soup cold. In day time I went to work and when I came back from work this was a 10-days prison in prison. The...uh...second Yom Kippur I did not work because I complained again and this doctor shouted at me. His name was Ilia Selimonowitz. I don't have the family name. And he said you don't want to work and that's it, and you will go to work, that's it, and get out. The next day the marchik is the...that is a man who drives you to work, that sees to it that nobody stays inside. It's usually a criminal and many years of experience there and if necessary, he beats you up, then...then you have enough. You will remember next time not to hide. He...uh...called out my name that I am not going because I'm sick. So this whole scene was made by the doctor in order not to be under suspicion that he is on a high holiday...on a high holiday, Jewish high holiday freeing prisoners not to work. The third Yom Kippur...I came before that already an invalid because I was weighing...I did not know my weight, but I was so thin and so weak that they could not push me to work. So the doctors, Polish doctor declared me an invalid of \_\_\_\_ That means I have the right to sleep on the bunker. I get a piece of the bread and the soup and I don't have to go to work. So that Yom Kippur I did not go to work because I didn't have to. I



mention that because it was...at that time when I started to give a account, I had a home. I had a family. I had a mother, a brother, a sister, relatives. And all probably looked where I am, hungry and almost dying. My body was going. It was my soul. My knowledge of my religion, my education from Homburg that made me think I will survive, gave me hope. I used to cover myself and forget where I am and dreaming that today is holiday. The fourth Yom Kippur I was in a camp because Russia lost a lot of people at Stalingrad and in the war at all, and they started to empty out prisons...prison camps, especially those people that could not work. And they want them out maybe to replace the men that were killed. So I was sent to a camp. There I was told I cannot go out. He looked at me and he said in Russian language, "\_\_\_\_\_." He is such a bird. They don't know what to do with." There is such an expression in Russian, \_\_\_\_\_. Such a bird! So I was sent back and a few days later I was called to the gate and I was told to go take my few things, less than I brought here today. And there was a horse and wagon waiting and a woman was sitting on it. She's going to have a child. And I...and the...the man with the gun, \_\_\_\_\_, went with us to go to another camp. Could see it from far away. It was a workers' camp. In contrast to this camp which was an assembly place for those they took eventually go out. I couldn't walk that far so I told him I cannot. I was sitting down in the snow. I cannot. So he told the woman to go up...down, and put me up because the horse could not pull that much. Such a horse wasn't fat either. We finally arrived after 1 and a half hours there and there I was taken to the office and in the office there was sitting a woman that...uh...told me, "Grandpa." And I looked at her because I had a beard and I walked with a cane which I bought for a piece of bread...that somebody made out of wood. And she said, "Take a look." I said, "I'm not a grandpa. I'm 39 years old, and I..." And she said, "Take a look at the mirror." And it was the first time in many years that I saw a mirror and I didn't recognize myself. Being friendly to me...she was a \_\_\_\_\_, she was a prisoner too. She told me...uh...I told her, "I'm hungry. I didn't get anything to eat from the morning til now. It's afternoon." She said, "I cannot give you anything I don't have." And it was Christmastime, and nobody was there of the high ranking. And she said, "Evenings when they give everybody to eat again." So I had to wait. And I got the piece of bread and I went..before that I went to the \_\_\_\_\_, so called hospital of the camp and told the doctor I hardly can walk. I'm hungry. And he looked at me and he never saw somebody with the ribs out like this and he put me on the scale and I weigh...weighed 40 kilo, which you know is 88 pounds. It was the first time in 4 years I found out how much I weigh. So he put me in the so called sick... sick...uh...place, and there I got twice a day soup. The bread was brought...brought to me, and one spoonful of oil. What kind of oil I don't know. After 14 days...it's the most time a man can be there, I didn't gain because he weighed me again. I didn't weigh...weigh...uh...gain any weight, but he told me he has to sign me out. And I was signed out. I was put in a barrack and the people there...working people. They went out. And when they saw somebody weak, never from the outside where you're beaten. They didn't touch you. When you stood before them, you had to have your hands in the back and that was it. Never! Never! Never! They told you only in nasty words but otherwise you were not beaten. The prisoners were among themselves because so many nationalities which hated themselves and they were altogether there in those camps. Uh...One tried to take away this like can that I had where I got my...my...my soup. The other one saw my...my jacket which

was rags was better than his, and he wanted me to exchange. But lucky enough towards evening...quite a bit of people came back from work and among them boys from Vienna. Jewish boys from Vienna. Oh, I said...and I am bad on Germans and working there. This is a working camp and I will not go free. And that was very sad. But they had flour because they worked unloading flour and they brought flour with them. And they took water and flour and made it because our soup was watery. The spoon did not stand, but there the spoon stood. And they gave me as much as I wanted of flour and water and with a spoon to eat. And I told them about what the others do to me and they went over and told them, "You are talking here to soldiers. You will get it." And they let me go. Let me go. They called me uncle. Was 20. 21 years boys that were expelled from Vienna. Children of...probably of parents that once were from Galicia and lived in Vienna and the children are born there and they were prisoners there. What happens to them I don't know. Anyhow, after a short while I was called back to the other camp. When I came to the other camp it was empty. Only a few people from...uh...which you see now on television from this..from those Republic that wants to be by themselves. They...we had there to sleep. The food was not good. Again a piece of bread and that soup. So I had no other way. I lived everyday in and out, but I didn't go to work. It was in February. It was Christmastime. It was in February. We didn't have the calendar. I cannot tell you exactly the date and it was very hard winter, of course there 40 below. And...uh...but one nice day, that is a nice day in 44, in March 44, I went somewhere. I went to the man of the kitchen, in charge and he was from White Russian, a Polish citizen from White Russia and he wanted to learn how to speak German. So he will give me a little bit of bread and soup. So I spent my time with him. As soon as he didn't cook I spent my time with him. When I came back to the barrack, "Where are you? Where have you been?" The \_ looked for you. I said to him, "I'm free to go. I don't have to go...be where...I'm in the camp. I was in the camp." The \_\_\_\_\_ came back, called my name. Always that same way, "Maxim \_\_\_\_\_." Max, the son of Solomon. \_ You go to freedom. I didn't believe it because I was once sent there before. He said, "You are the bird." And he didn't let me out. That was in March of 1944. In other words, I was 4...and 4...and 4 years and 5 months about in prison. He told me I have to go and get a shave, a haircut, and a so-called bath. That means a little bit of water with...with almost no soap and the second one to put...to put over me, to clean me up from the soap. They gave me a different jacket than I had on. It had no holes and it was very good. It suited me so that the next 2 years at my house as everything where I slept on there, where I kept my bread, where I kept everything. The next morning...and I must tell you according...it was the 27th of March...of April...of April. I'm here...I'm here wrong. On the 27th of April, Yom Ha-Shoah falls on the same date today when I was liberated and I was knowing it that it was the 27th day of Mishnah, because of the moon again. I went to freedom. How? The \_\_\_\_\_, elderly Russians...among them one Jew, a lawyer from Leningrad who got 10 years as a Troskiers, and he was have to serve...he served for 47, but they let him out because of sickness in 44. Like several others. We went to the station. They gave us a loaf of bread, but we considered that it's too weighing too much. We cut off one piece for the two days trips. And a herring...not a herring that you buy. There's everything in. There's nothing taken out, but you like it you ate everything. Ate even the bones you chewed down all the way. One herring and this piece of bread and that was it.

So we came to the station quite a bit from the camp. There the window was closed and after a certain time she opened it up. There was...uh...uh...a station made of wood. Everything is wood there. They have nothing else, but wood. And it was, of course, cold. Worse than outside because the cold inside is usually worse when it's not heated. And she opened up. She said, "Children." In Russian they talked that way. "The Biata...I have no tickets for you today. The train will come through in half an hour and they have no space on that train. The train from Blabivostick to go...went through there and we were going \_\_\_\_\_ City of Kotanich. That is the city where the Czar used to send all people that didn't behave like politically sent there, and there everything was encumbered there. There were more encumbered there than free people. There we were sent. The next day we complained it is cold. What shall we do? She said, "I have a saw. I have everything. Go to the forest. It's not far...far from here. Get some wood and heat it. I will be glad to." I said, "Are you kidding? When we take the wood from today, it will take months to dry to be able to make fire with it. You want us to make for you wood. We'll let you have it later. So all of us went up...up there. There was a gallery and one next to the other warmed himself. The food was gone. The bread was gone. The herring was gone. Before we went into the train. Who keeps bread? Because it was immediately stolen by somebody else. When you kept it, he took it away from you. If you slept for 1 minute there were among them thieves enough, and they took it. It took ...uh...I think 3...no 2 days...2 days, the 27th...29th yal, we came to Kotenish. On the way...uh...to...uh...where they told us to go, we met...we met a man with one foot. And he was in...he was in the...in the army and lost his foot. He was shoeless. He ask...he asked us, \_\_\_\_\_. Are you Jewish? \_\_\_\_\_. The lawyer and I. Then he changed into Yiddish. He didn't know much. First he said, "Shalom." He said, "The lawyer told him he is from Leningrad and he got 10 years." He told him a little bit of his story, and his wife and daughter and other children are here and here but he cannot go now because it's frozen. And he will have to be in Kotenish. They wrote him about it until he can make it by boat because he had no horses to go on the ice. \_\_\_, a German Jew. He sent me to a butcher who had goose there in the marketplace. All I had what my papers was that I was come from a concentration camp, Paragraph 58, that means Russianary...a man who can be a spy, everything the worse that exists. And I came to this goose and I told him that a man with one foot who had by the way the Lenin...uh... Medal for bravery sent me to you. And he said to me, "German Jew? You from the concentration camp you come out now." All the Jews came out in 41. He was a Polish...but he was not in a concentration ever because he was a communists and he went by \_\_\_\_\_ that means by free will when the Russians came in he reg...registered he wants to go where the Messiah is. There he had the butcher...the butcher thing there, butcher store. From here he gave to the workers every week or every two weeks a piece of meat that was allowed to them because of work. If they worked they got...except Vodka, a piece of bread. And he said, "The German Jews were not nice to us." I said, "It is true I was born in Germany, but my parents were not born and to prove to you I speak fluently Yiddish." Start talking Yiddish and he thought it over and he looked here and there, couldn't make his heart giving in to give me something. But then we looked and as far as three times from here to the door, the other side of the marketplace was a young man looking like a Haludient and he looked and he called him because he was knowing him. So he told him...uh...a German Jew, \_\_\_,

uh...is here and he wants...and he wants to...uh...to...uh...make me to help him. He comes from the concentration camp. So he took out 300 rubles and gave it to him to give it to me. When he did that he went and bought me...brought me a piece...a little piece of a...of a roll, black roll and some milk. So I told him I cannot use the milk. I haven't had it for several...for 5 years almost. I'm afraid to drink it. But the bread...so he brought me \_\_\_\_\_ which is boiled water. In Russia, as soon as they came in occupied they put a kettle on the...up in the middle of the city and constantly burning and to that you have hot water but no sugar. So I...I...I came about early afternoon and I made him, as I talk to you, I think I am capable to convince him that I am not so bad and he should help me. He brought me more bread and he told me, "I am living with a Russian woman. She has a...they all had their own one room or two room home, and sometimes a cow. Sometimes! And he even made the remark if she's at home she should burn...and in Yiddish it sounds even different...then I cannot give you anything. But if she is not at home I will give you potatoes....uh...fried potatoes. I was lucky. She was not at home.

Q: Excuse me. I want to stop. We're going to change tapes and then we'll pick up from there.

A: Fine. I have to go to the washroom.

A: Okay. How it is so far. I have it still a long to talk. It will be more than 2 hours.

Q: That's fine.

**End of Tape #1**

**Tape #2**

Q: We're back on camera. Now? Okay. Uh...Tell me...the butcher gave you food or did the butcher take you home? Tell me about the butcher.

A: When we talk about the butcher, he had not a butcher's store. It was a booth with an open window and nights locked. You couldn't go into it. From the street, you showed your that means to prove that you are entitled to so and so much meat. And he gave it to you and he saw to it that he didn't give you everything to you was yours because he needed some for a black market so that he could exchange it. The...he took me home and he wanted to help me. All of a sudden, his Jewish heart came out. He wasn't an educated man, but his Jewish heart came out and he said, "Stop suffering." I did not know...I thought he...I said, "You went by one of the \_\_\_\_\_ and they were nice to you. You were a friend. I wasn't considered a friend." So he went with me to another Jewish place. The man was not married and he lived in a small \_\_\_\_\_ there. I said, "All I can do....I cannot sleep here. I can give him bread." And that was like giving you blood. Because it was rationed. And he gave me a big piece of bread. I had, as I told you before...uh... \_\_\_\_\_ called and there I put in with the piece of rag a big pocket. And needles we made ourselves. Got a piece of wire and yarn we got from other materials and I sewed a big pocket in and there I kept all the things that I hoped I will have when I...get...don't get anything I will not die from hunger. Of course, I couldn't eat anymore bread so I put the bread away. Then he continued...he needed from me where to go to sleep. Outside was still 30 below, and it was end of May. So we went to a place. Her name was Sara. I never was her...know her name. And there was somebody living there by the name of Shiem, Shier. And her so called husband...don't know, Samuel...I don't know. Don't remember. She was...she had two rooms. One was like this window here where we are look on it, that you could look out and there was a big scale inside a scale...outside the scale and inside to read up how much it weighs. The farmers used to bring their product...delivered, that they had to deliver and she rated...and in the other room there slept. And he told her, "Sara, the man has to sleep somewhere. You know I cannot take him to me." She wouldn't give. But here he is among Jews...you understand, and she said, "When Shier comes home from work, she will talk to him. So I waited...he went home in the meantime and left me there...get rid of me, and then the others will take over. So when Shier came home he said, "No. We don't know you. You may have lice." They had the lice. I was deloused. When I went out I was deloused. So they had lice. And he cannot...no...and he gave and he gave me a piece of bread. It is blood and a drink. And they let me be on the hayloft. There I went up and I thought maybe the hay...when I go under the hay I will not...I will be not too cold. It will be not so bad. But after 2, 3, 4, 5 minutes I had to get up. Couldn't stand there. I started to exercise, do whatever I could and I was waiting because I went to bed 6 o'clock, got...got...got night there and... uh...in the morning...the nights were short. Came already towards June and there was already sometimes when it had only half a hour night. And I was waiting for the morning to see again the butcher. Shier came up before he went to work and he told me in Yiddish, "\_\_\_\_\_." So I told him, "It's cold and I am almost frozen and so on and so." He cried and he gave me 500 rubles. He said for 500 rubles, could buy 2 and a

half loaf of bread on the black market. It is not so much, but 2 and a half loaves of bread. I went to the butcher and I told him everything and he went...he brought me a hot soup. Not good, not that soup. It was bitter, bitter flour. I don't know what's in it...what it...what it was. Probably a food that they give to animals but...uh...you cannot die from it. And I had...uh...the hot soup and the bread again and he was...he told me he made an arrangement with a Russian Jew who has chil...children that are...uh...manager of a cohoss. Cohoss is like the kibbutz. When he came and he start to talk to me, I went with him because he started from Kanaa and he wanted to know this and that. "Oh," he said, "Yal. Yal. Yal." And he showed me his wife is standing on the black market and sell things. They were fleeing the Germans, and he pretended that they always...that they took the last things with them and he sells it day after day so that they can live. But in fact, he was a black marketing. Things she bought, got and they lived. So he took me home and I got the first time after 4 and a half years of my life, I got a hot dinner. That means a piece of meat, a soup with beans and..and noodles. But sleeping he couldn't give me. He was tight, and they didn't know who I am from a concentration camp. Didn't know. And I had a beard and I walked with a cane. I didn't look like I look today. Came back and the man, the butcher went home and he couldn't do anything for me so I went to the railroad station. Because the railroad station you wait for a train and there is an oven. So I went there to sit down and warm myself until the next night goes through and then I had an appointment with a Ukrainian manager where the children said he should get in touch with me to go to the cohoss. There I had...there had a hat...I had to sleep and where to live. I was sitting there and fell asleep at the oven, at the belly oven because I didn't sleep the night before and I was always on my feet. I wonder today how I did it. And I was awake by...uh...by...uh... . And he said, "What are you doing here? Where is your papers?" Papers mean that everybody that was over those years had to have a passport. So I had to have something to show who I am and why I am in this city. If I'm allowed in this city or in this village. You couldn't go from one city to one village without permission of the \_\_\_\_\_. When he looked it...oh, he said, Paragraph 58, come on with me. And he took me to higher...like you see him today on television was a nicer camp. You know, you see them today. And he told me...he told me..uh...what are you doing here. Where.... I said, and I told him about that...what I told right now. I said I was released from a concentration camp and I have nowhere to be and I'm frozen. Why it was much better in the camp. I got a little bit of soup and a piece of bread, but there I couldn't lay down. It's worse than freedom in here. He said...and I showed him...I said I have to work. I said where should I work? If I cannot work in the camp and I showed him I was only bones. Think he...he cried or anything? He told, "Get out of here. This time I let you out. Otherwise, we give you another 10 years. Get out of here. When I find you once more, then you go back to a...to a camp." So I was afraid to go back and I spent the rest of the night up and down on the street. Snow! Winter! Siberia! The next day I hardly could wait for the butcher again. There was my place where I met my future helper. And the Ukrainian manager came. He was quite nice. Ukrainians were not so nice to Jews, but he was at that time quite nice to me. He said, "Can you teach me German?" I said, "Yes." "So come on to...with me to our cohoss and I will see to it that you have something to eat." And he took from the newspaper a little piece of paper because they have no paper there...from a newspaper and wrote down to the kibbutz manager there, a woman,

to give me 4 or 5 potatoes...I don't remember the details, 4 or 5 potatoes and a bowl of sauerkraut. So I waited because I will go with several other people, with their girl who had been to the marketplace, brought there something from the village to take home, salt, \_\_\_\_\_, and he told that one girl, "See to it that he goes there and there...there to this village," because she lived not far away. She didn't know if I was Jewish. She didn't know who I was. She saw that I'm a grandpa. Good looking, strong, not educated girl. And she helped me to carry that little wooden case where I had nothing in. I...I...I threw it away after that. (clearing throat) And when I came they were all sleeping because it took us a long time. They were all sleeping. She woke up. I gave her this little ticket. She gave me the potatoes. She gave the sauerkraut and in the farm house always benches along in Russia, where they sleep. They sleep on the oven and all on the benches all high up because the heat goes up. So I laid down and I couldn't...I couldn't get up anymore. I couldn't get up anymore because in walking so far, I had pains here, my bones. I think close to the...to the first of May. I made there a mistake. It was the first of May...it was the end of April and not May. I have got to correct that. I was...was right originally that it is...uh...it is the 27th of April and...uh...not May. Uh...uh...I got...they were sitting down that day over meat, bread, soup and I didn't get anything. Uh...She told me in Russian, she told me \_\_\_\_\_. "Whoever does not work does not get." She had red hair and all the people that worked in that cohoss came to that party and she had I think 3 or 4 or 5 children from different men. There was one...I think he was 16 years old. Red hair like his mother, and he didn't like it what she talked to me. And he took something from the table when she went away for a minute and gave it to me and said, "Cover yourself and eat." And that was it. The next day I was waiting for the man, the manager of the cohoss, Ukrainian. That day I got so much soup, so much bread. Course meals, but so much but after then I was afraid I will fall sick. Everything was bloated, not used anymore to such food because it was all chunked together. For the first next few days, I did not work. I taught him German. And he gave me a piece of sausage which was not good for me because it was fat. I couldn't...I wasn't used to anything...any that, and...uh...I...I might...may make a joke. I lived all the way...all the time kosher. We never got any meat. All we got was a cabbage and a piece of bread and sometimes a a head of a fish. A head of fish or a herring. And I didn't want it. For two reasons! I was afraid I cannot digest it and on the other hand, I break...I break dietary laws. I thought to myself. Then I became...uh...uh...watching the field evenings, nights...uh...as a watchman that nobody takes out the newly put in potatoes or whatever. Of course, it was cold and all night and it was that reason...for that you got a piece of bread, like in the camp and the soup and...uh...and every two weeks a bottle of vodka, a liter of vodka. I didn't stay very long there because I couldn't. It was too cold outside. So he transferred me to the hospital for the...to the state hospital of that city for the people that were not quite healthy and there were quite a bit of German soldiers there that \_\_\_\_\_ and they talked freely. Hitler will win and all that because they were not normal. And there I couldn't stay very long because there was a night service and they wanted me to clean up there what they did on the floor and all that, and they had no soap either. So I didn't stay very long, but the doctor in charge over there, the Russian woman, saw that I...uh...must be...some...somewhere...some...she wanted to know more about me. And...uh...she gave me cigarettes but she could not help me. I had to go back to work.

Everybody has to work and I had to go to the field again. There I fell asleep and I had some potatoes already prepared to take home and somebody that checked on me told them about me. That would be 5 or 10 years again for doing that. She got me out of it...got me out it, and I left that hospital. And I did not work. I went on the black market again. But there was a bookkeeper that gave me at that time what I had to come for that work and she was a Jewish woman from Kiev. Her husband was...uh...State Attorney in Kiev and he was sentenced for 10 years by Stalin as not reliable. And she had a daughter living with her 8 or 9 years and never heard from her husband again. We became friendly. I visited her. So what I got more from her was an onion or a garlic and a little bit more bread and we had talks. In the meantime, I had company with that Mr. Becker who became after then the conservative rabbi of Memphis that gave me the...the money...that gave me the money. I met him at services. He made a Minyan in 1944 in September at Sara's place because she had an extra room. Now he prayed the Musaf service and I pray...I prayed the Shofer service. And at that place we were four people, all foreign Jews but one. It was a Russian Jew. He was...name was Matowich. He was in his high 70s. He fled Ukraine, and he had a prayer book. Didn't take anything this prayer book, the Moosberg. And from that we prayed and all the other said, yes...yes...harman or. When he heard me pray...Becker, he decided he wants to be more friendly to me, wants to know about me. He was afraid of anybody because he was...uh...every 3 months checked if he can go to the front line again because he came from Rovno which not far away from Limburg and there they took him into the army and they retreated and you know where he \_\_\_ in 14 days the Germans were before Moscow. And all of those people there that army, they're taken to camps. Not concentration camps, but not transports. And every 3 months he was checked for his health and he played the crazy one. So he could not tell me and he didn't have the con...I could be linked up with their men. He did not know. But then he got confidence in me. He told me that has \_\_\_ from the Yeshiva in \_\_\_, and he was writing for The Moment in Warsaw and was a friend of Begin. Begin was retired the Youth Movement, and he wrote for The Moment \_\_\_ articles. Now, he doesn't know about his family anymore and that was it. He is here. He became so friendly I told, "Why do you read the Russian paper. Learn English. One nice day we will be in Western Europe, the Western Hemisphere, and English will be it and not Russia." So the girl where I lived had a book, an English book, was a first 2 years used. And we talked. I forgot to tell you that a man...man by the name of Smiger, a photographer, helped me more than anybody else. The butcher told me, "Go to Smiger. Tell him who you are. I told him already that you are here." And he gave me, of course, something to eat. Bread and butter, and some fruit...fruit, had some fruit. He had...he was a photographer because, as I'd mentioned before, anybody after the age of 12 has to have a passport. So he was making these pictures for passports and had to give him for 5 rubles. But then...when you wanted more pictures, you had to give 50 or a hundred rubles and there where he has the money. Here he got money for more pictures or he got a piece of chicken or a piece of \_\_\_, or a piece of bread. I helped Smiger developing the pictures. So he set me up with an elderly woman that was on the black market and she had a room...an apartment...a room, and there I slept on the floor. It was summertime so it was not so bad. Then came, as I mentioned before, Rosh Hashanah and we prayed there and the next year...the whole year, there was a war over in May, but we



did not know anything what to do and when we will be repatriated. So one nice day, Becker, who was not...not \_\_\_\_\_he was from the Army. He was \_\_\_\_\_. They were all, as we say, \_\_\_\_\_. They could...he said to...to Sara...she was...she was in addition, she was a dressmaker, and she made all the dresses for the \_\_\_\_\_ women. So he told her, I got the puputska. That means the so-called passport to go home to Rovno to see where my parents are. But there is room. \_\_\_\_\_ which will never get out of here. Can you see that the man there...we are a friend...write your name. There's room for both of us that we go on the same trip with her. She listened. The next day we came and she said, "You did me a very bad service. They wanted almost to kill me. To take someone with paragaraph 58 they had you...his papers, your papers there and...uh...want to smuggle him out from here?" So that was it. That was October 1945. And we said goodbye, but we made out he's going over Moscow and in case he can find out if I go, then he will let me...with one word, give me a cable, \_\_\_\_\_. That means okay. And that will mean that I go. Uh...He asked him...that was Gomulka. You heard about Gomulka? He was after then the main chief in the new government. He was the Secretary. He was in Moscow waiting for the...for the creation of the new Polish Posusky army against the London army \_\_\_\_\_ army. During the time in Kotenich, in 45 Stalin made it that we had to come to meetings to know more about the new army that he is founding, and wanted our okay you know.

Q: Who is our...what do you mean?

A: Posusky army? Our is Russia...Russian...uh...Russian...uh ....uh...the opposite the Russian regime in communism, the new army \_\_\_\_\_ be considered fascist. And when...when...when Becker said to me, "Come on with me. What do you have to lose?" I said, "Aw, what shall I sit down there." He said, "You know piece of choc you get and a piece of sugar." So I went. I went with him two or three times. And you had to fill out your name like he told me, "Here sign." And I signed my name. So when he asked Becker in Moscow...Gomulko asked him, "What did he do for Poland? Who is he?" So he gave him the name and do you know they had the register of everybody who came to the meetings. When he saw that I came three times, two or three times to the meeting he said to him, "He will go." And I got the letter \_\_\_\_\_. I was very happy.

Q: Explain what that means?

A: That means...not everybody was repatriated. I was sent not as a Pole. I was sent as a German. Then to them I was a German. And only Polish people were repatriated. So...but we explained to him that my parents were born in Poland and I am not a German. I am a Jew. And when he saw that I was to these meetings, he said, "He will go. I put him on the list."

Q: Gomulka himself?

A: Gomulka himself but him on the list. That what he told me that he will say I wasn't there. That was somewhere November of 45. I went on with my life. Black market. I lived with

Smiger. His wife went home to Leningrad, and he let me in..in a place to sleep on the side there. And there we met this girl that had the English book, and there we met the woman that was...that was her house. Until the end she made...she told Becker where are you going.

Q: CAN'T MAKE THIS OUT.

A: The...the...the one that protect the...uh...the apartment, so-called...uh...uh...house, two bed...two...two room house. And she said she has a daughter. She studies to be engineer. And when she comes back, she's a pretty girl. He shouldn't go. She explained it. She explained it. Her husband was a drunkard. And she did not know what Jews are. She looked at us for over a year. When I lived with Smiger she looked at us. And we had never come drunk, never beat the women up. These are Jews? And she said she knows only from her youth time that in Kotenich was a doctor and the pharmacist were Jewish, sent by the Czar because of not behaving. But otherwise she knows only from the holy writings that we killed Jesus. But these are Jews? She doesn't want us to go. She wants us to say. For me, she had her sister. Well, we listened. What should we say? It was very nice. He went and he went over Moscow and he went to Rovno. There was nothing left. Everything burned and as you know from the history, there was everywhere Judenrein.

Q: Mrs. Becker \_\_\_\_\_?

A: Yal. Yal. But then he went from there to Katowice into a kibbutz of \_\_\_\_\_ of Jews and Catholics. That's \_\_\_\_\_. And he wrote me a little card, and the card came where he is....to not to lose him where he is and what I do? So I answered him that I'm still here and I didn't get my...didn't get my card. After 2 or 3 months he didn't get it, but I'm still here. It's censored and then they don't...don't...didn't give it. His was different. So I went on with my black marketing to have butter and bread and a even a piece of meat. I didn't care. Then I went to Keof. Keof was the capital of that State, \_\_\_\_\_. And before Becker left, he got me a coat, a military coat and a cap. When I had that on, nobody bothered me. I went with a cane, they were saying he is bobby, police from the army. So I went into that train to buy newspaper because newspaper and matches were a black market item. And then I went to the office of the Polish...uh...government that was installed there for repatriating. And I went up there. There was a Jewish girl from Galicia, and...uh...I told her my story and she went back and she said, "You are on the list. You will go." And she made me the man that takes back for all the people, leather goods. I mean...things that you...they have no value but what they country had that they gave them. They should prepare themselves that in...uh ...uh...April or May, when it gets warmer, we will go. It's the last transport because the big transport went already and during these strong winter months, they stopped it because they wouldn't survive under the circumstances and it took too long and I called up one day again, and she told me, "Good, go up to the \_\_\_\_\_ and tell him for next week to have a car, you know, animal car for you to come to Keof to join in that transport. When I came home with the goods that she gave me...and somebody helped me to carry it. I couldn't carry it. At the station Koternish, the \_\_\_\_\_ was there. And it was already dark, and they lit up there things there and to see

who I am. They see so much goods in private hands. They took me to the police and there they kept me from 6 or 7 o'clock til 12 o'clock night and there were a lot of people there they got from the street and they started to open up and everybody wanted to take something. I warned them this is this and this, for those and those people and I'm not responsible. When I gave the address of the office, the office had no telephone. The office was closed, and then they sent a man on a bicycle to her apartment. And she confirmed that this is from her and I got two policemen that brought me home where I lived and I distributed all those things the next day. I who talked the worse Prussian was made as a leader of 30 or 40 people...I don't remember. When I came to the \_\_\_\_\_, to tell him I need the car, and to stamp the \_\_\_\_\_, they told me, "The car will be there." But it wasn't. So I called her and complained and afternoon there was...it was there. And we went away. Of course, a few friends that I made cried, especially the bookkeeper that was in charge there of the hospital. She came out to see me off. Uh...Her brother...the landlady's brother there where Smiger and I lived...uh...told me that...uh...why I don't stay? They will me a...uh...home and his daughter is not married. She was a teacher and a sergeant in the army. Very good looking and healthy, you know. And I did not know that she took an eye on me because she passed there. I...I did live in the room and she passed there and saw me. But during that time, there was a law given out that anybody that is...that care...has a right to be repatriated when he is married from wherever she comes, she can go with. So there was a young lady. I can say really a lady. Her husband was the transport minister in Estonia. And her father was a banker. And they were taken the first day when the Russians came in and they never saw them again, and her mother and herself and several children, they sent to Kotenish. When she heard that I speak German...you know, these Lithuanian, Estonia, and Latvia, there...uh...the language was German. And she made my acquaintance and she told me that she has a lot of money in banks in Western Europe. If I take her out and get married to her, either we stay married if I want; otherwise...but she will help me with a lot in business as a businessman. So, of course, I denied it. I didn't want to go into \_\_\_\_\_ perform a marriage. But was I myself considered myself very..very weakly patriation man.. I was always a question...question mark if I go back not to connect myself with another dark person. I can endanger and I don't come out again. So I told her I cannot do it. Finally, when we came to Keof, very happy I have my paper with me, and I have some rubles from the black market and I went to buy some cigarettes on the market and other things, and my paper was stolen. I got so frightened and I went to that woman from the office there. Said, "Your fault. You will stay here. What you think? I can make paper for you? Why do you go on the black market? Aren't you glad to get out from here?" And shouted at me and all that. So I was told have to go to the office where they lose and find and that was closed and after 4 o'clock it opened, and she didn't have anything and I had to bring...uh...uh...uh ...uh...little piece of paper that I was there. If she had no paper, so I went without the paper and I went back to her. Broken! Heart broken! 6 o'clock. And this is not just here, and there's a taxi or anything. All or a piece of bread. When you have to you have to. So she told me, "I'll tell you what. I go with you night to the \_\_\_\_\_. Maybe they give you another paper." I just called them and told them about. She said, "Let me see. Come over. I don't promise you anything." So night at 10 I met her, and we went over there. And I was sitting on the stairs of the \_\_\_\_\_, outside. Told me to come in. Took a

look. But she told me before to make pictures again, but the office was closed...the picture stores were closed, so I got on the black market a picture. I have still this little picture at home. One...one of them. I paid a good price for it, and I got 4, 5 little pictures and I was afraid the passport will not accept it, will not be the right picture. Somehow, midnight I was called in. I gave him the picture and I was told to wait outside and in an hour I had a new paper with the picture on. I thanked her and I made my way and I hitchhiked to the station. That was far away. So I was on one...on one car and then he set me off. He cannot go farther. And I got the second one and the third one. I arrived at the station 5 o'clock in the morning and I didn't see the car where we were in the train where we were in. So I met somebody that I was knowing from the train. He said, "They changed...the last two days overnight on another...another...another line." When I came there most of the people had given money. Jewish people. When I come back, they said I will not get out from here. It can take a year or not...never, and they took all money together and gave it to me. So I did not accept it. I said, "I have papers." A day later I didn't go out anymore. I stayed in the car. Didn't even go out. The next day we moved, and it took quite some time to get to the Polish border. I think 14 days or something like that. I arrived in July...in July. We left...left in June...beginning of June. I arrived in July. Uh...There at the Polish border I went...the first station they let us out. We wanted Bicksley, was Bresleytos. And I remember from my school years during the war that Hindenberg made the first peace with the Russians in Bresleytos. And I was curious to know how Bresleytos looked because there was \_\_\_\_\_. It was very famous. And I went to the...to the marketplace, and there I saw women with the \_\_\_\_\_ as their hair...head gear, all around with the scarf and they had rings and they had watches. You could buy everything if you had money. So I said, "Where did you get it all from?" "Oh, from the Jews." You know, \_\_\_\_\_ Jews anymore. I said...when I asked him if see anywhere a synagogue. Synagogue? All burned." So with a heavy heart...I didn't look at the watches. I didn't look at what has happened. I went back to the train and about a few hours later we were at the Polish border. The Polish border was already an officer...Polish officer standing and he called out, "Who is Catholic in this train?" We have for you help? I said, "Who helps us?" He said, "The Joint in German, not here." What do you say to that? So we went on and in that train I made again the acquaintance of a man who was from Poland and he went there by \_\_\_\_\_, by free will and his two sons were in the Polish army and were officers even the army now. And he married. He was a widower and he married another young woman with a child and he took her with...one of these marriages to take out from Russia. When we arrived in Breslow, now, well I as knowing Breslow, I was several times there during my youth time. There was a famous...uh...rabbinical college, \_\_\_\_\_, interpreter of our thing. Uh...The policeman didn't let us out. Let him out with his wife and child because the son was waiting for him and the officer...uh...dressed in a Polish officer. So I went down nevertheless and I told him that I was born in Germany. All I wanted was get back to Germany and he should be so kind to tell the policeman to let me go. I am not going into that new territory that is between Breslow, between Katowice, between Krakau and the Oder River, you know, that is now Polish. And there they want us to settle. The apartments were empty. Furniture was there. Everything! The people they pushed out. When I came to Breslow he took us in...into his apartment, not apartment. Had a big balcony. That balcony he let us live. He said, "When you want to go to

the washroom you can come in. Otherwise you cannot come in. If you come in, then I have to tell you to go." That was a Friday afternoon some day in July.

Q: \_\_\_\_ very clear. Who is taking you into the apartments?

A: The son of that man that married the Jewish woman. He had two sons in the Polish army. He lived very nice. Half of the house was ruined but there was still some apartments in tact. It was in the nicest neighborhood of Breslow. I was in that...in that train of the 30 of us or even 40, but I was the manager of the 30...was a young man. He was learned Yeshiva, and he was going back. And the man by the Ginselman. Ginselman lived in Kotenish and he had always a big \_\_\_\_\_. And he didn't...didn't associate himself with...uh...the Jews. In the train when he was already on the way back to Poland, he said he is Jewish? I said, "What do you have the cross on?" And he explained it. They let him live. He worked. They let him live. So the Yeshiva \_\_\_\_, and Ginselman and I were the three people that went in Breslow up on that balcony. We prayed for each other that these are two people they let them come with me. And the other one said, "\_\_\_\_\_." Let me...as always Jews...Jews are...and he said, "Yes." That Friday evening we decided...we had bread, and the Yeshiva\_\_\_\_ had honey. How he had it I don't know. And we ate honey and bread and we felt great. And not...not the one time did they come out to ask us how we are, and only they watched us that we don't go farther than the outside there to the washroom. Inside the apartment, but outside of the balcony. Ginselman was not religious and he decided he's going to look on Sabbath morning what's going on in Breslow. What do we need him, he said. And the two of us said, "God had gotten a few months freedom in a way we will not violate the Sabbath. We'll stay here till the Sabbath is out and tomorrow morning so God will be \_\_\_\_\_. Ginselman came back evenings late. He told us there is a so-called ghetto that the Jews were...uh...were kept, but it's better for them that it would seem and the people they kept there, secure because there was always a Jewish...uh...policeman ...uh...24 hours. You couldn't get in. There was still one synagogue left in the rear. They didn't burn it because it was between buildings...an old, little synagogue and...uh...he got soup from the Joint. I never got it. When I came it was already out. I have not quite such a good heart from that help to tell you the truth. Tell you later about it. And...uh...on the marketplace, we met a man that wasn't looking quite normal. And he had an apartment in a poor workers' neighborhood. He was...uh...repatriated too. He was...and his wife and he had two children. And he had a room where we could sleep. He said, "You can sleep." He had two beds. Aw, come to get, but not on the streets, like in Russia. So we took it. But before I went to sleep, I went to the marketplace. What did I find out and you will be surprised. A man by the name of Rosenberg, who was born in Poland, as a child came to Homburg. We went together to school, and he went to Russia by free will and his mother and his sister. He said to me, "Max, you are born in Germany. You have a good chance to get out of here. I wish I had your birth certificate." I said, "I have no birth certificate. I have no papers. The paper I had was paragraph 58 and I threw it away that nobody should even know. So what should I do? I remembered I lived in Katowice. And when you live in Poland or in Germany, within 24 hours you have to go to the office to register. It's not the United States. So I said, "I will get an \_\_\_\_ certification that I was born in Germany." Because I

went up to the man of the Jewish community...he was a German Jew and he told me, "You have to bring papers." I said so and so. He said, "I cannot do anything for you unless you have a birth certificate. And my birth certificate was in the French zone. Essen on the Ruhr \_\_\_\_\_. So I did not know what to do. So Rosenberg in the meantime introduced me to a woman who had a ticket, a seat, number 64 in that train to go to Germany. She was a German Jewess from Breslow and she has a right to go. She has the papers. Elderly woman. She said she would like to go later. She needs money. She needs something to buy to eat. And I had from the black market a suit. You wouldn't put on today, but it was a suit. I sold it for six thousand...six thousand slota on the black market. I did this when I came back with the papers...with the papers already. How did I get my papers? The afternoon I took a train from Breslow to Katowice. It was quite...uh...all night and it was Saturday, Friday evening when I arrived. Friday evening I had the card from Becker that he is in a kibbutz and I was knowing the address. I was knowing Katowice because I did business there. And I went to that kibbutz. Oh, was he surprised to see me. And I got a good dinner. Chicken and the traditional Jewish Friday evening dinner. And how did I sleep? We slept...they slept all over the floor, but clean in \_\_\_\_\_. So I said...they had no room, so the other one said, "We'll push together. One...one Jew more. Oh...let him sleep there." But when they saw I had no \_\_\_\_\_. You know what \_\_\_\_\_ is? I have it at home. My wife told me to take it with me. I'll give it to you tonight. Uh...uh...they didn't want me to sleep without it. So I got it...she washed it last week. I was looking for something else for my brother. Didn't find it, and I found that. And I got the \_\_\_\_\_ which I will give you and...uh...slept the night. In the morning I had to wait for services, and then they honored me in lifting the Torah and I didn't do it the proper way because you should turn around at least three chapters...have to show the...the community. I was not there for that. I was for the paper to get out from here. And they closed at 12 o'clock so I made...I got out. I didn't wait for kiddish. I got out and they were very polite. I gave them 200 slota, and I got a paper this and this born, there and there, lived here from that and that time. He's the son of that and that, and he came from Germany that and that day. It was Saturday. Took me a whole day to go back. Saturday afternoon that I took the train back. It was not yet night. It was dangerous for Jews on the street. It was 1946. Two young man said, "He didn't kill them all. There's another one." And I went among...mingled among the people. Had no...no luggage. I stood all night. The train was crowded. Had to stay...stand all night, and I arrived the next morning and I went with my paper and I was looking for the woman that wanted to sell me for 200 or three thousand dollars there the seat, and I found her and she got the 3...I sold the suit, and I gave her 3 thousand slota, and the other 3 thousand slota I used for food to keep me over until I get somewhere where I get something to eat. He didn't want. He said, "Why should this poor woman not stay here, and give it to you. Give her the seat." The man from the \_\_\_\_\_ that was in charge of letting people go. And on the other hand, "This is not a birth certificate." I said, "You make me \_\_\_\_\_." This tells you I was from Germany and I speak to you in German. I speak to you...let me to say today...in English it has a German accent, but my German had no accent. You could see immediately from where I come and I gave you the paper and the picture to it. Finally, he agreed and Monday morning I was on my way. I quickly bought bread and something to eat and...uh... I must tell you it was salted bacon. We couldn't have anything else. And before I

went into the train, three quarter of the bacon was taken away by the Polish checkpoint, and the bread I...I could keep, and I went into the train and I was one Jew among...among all Germans who was...were pushed out from that territory to make room for the Poles to take it over. Today, they don't think that way with Israel. They make it the point not there. Not there! Because this is not given to you. But they...they did it at that time. I arrived at the...in the zone in the Amer...in the Russian zone in Berlin. A German nurse was there. Blonde, and of course, friendly, and I told the English man, "I don't want her to serve me. I don't want that." And he insisted, "She is here in charge, and you will have to." First of all, papers...I gave you the papers. Okay. "You are one of them," he said, "Yal." I said, "I don't want any Germans. I heard what they did, and what they did to me." So I was deloused with DDT, which is today forbidden as you know. And I felt after that so fine, so relieved. Never had any lice anymore. Waiting on the other side, we decided to go to the English zone. There were 5, 6, 7 people, quite intelligent Polish Jews. Not those three Jews that talk only Yiddish, but educated with degrees and they were so glad to find a German. Somebody that speaks German that they...they will make no trouble. Said, "You will speak Polish and I will speak German." So we went to the English zone, and there they gave us..they gave us a place...uh...if it wouldn't be summer, it would be very bad. It was the dancing hall of a hotel. And there we got our things and we laid down and then we went for ticket to get food. As we were refugees, they gave us double rations. Germans \_\_\_\_ double ration. The double ration was not enough either. We put it together and the women started to cook.

Q: At this point we need to stop.

A: Stop, and I have to go to the washroom.

A: Okay.

Q: What...what time is it? So sorry.

Q: Okay, we have.....

Q: Okay. Begin.

A: To make it short, as soon as I came to...to Germany, I went from the English zone to the American zone and that was the place where I was treated first as a humanbeing. Uh...I had to decide what to do. To wait to go to Palestine, to go to Cyrprus and not to Palestine so when I got a letter from my cousin of mine that lived in originally in Televiv but went afterward to Yonkers, New York, Dr. , Dr. Fred...Fred \_\_\_\_ and he told me I should come to the United States. And he sent me immediately papers which I did not need because I had the right as a displaced person to go without papers if I had the quota. And the quota I had most of the people had to wait 10 to 12 years, and as I was in the German quarter, that start be good for me to be from Germany. I waited only 4 months, and in 4 months I was on my way to the United States. I arrived here 2nd of October, 1947, and then to friends in New

York...uh...I was sent on a position to Chicago and that why I'm living...living today in Chicago.

Q: How...uh...how did you feel about all this? How did all this experience affect you?

A: Well, when I have sometimes days when I am not very happy then I go back and I say it could have very much worse. Look where I got out from. I get from this out too. It...uh...I have no after affects. The only after affect is the way my mother, my sister, my nephew, niece were killed and how they...uh...took the health from my brother away that he died earlier than it was necessary. Otherwise, I...uh...survived with the hope that we will have healthy State in Israel and...uh...I am busy with metals that concern Israel.

Q: I thank you. You wanted to tell us about your brother.

A: My brother...my brother very seldom wanted to talk about it because it was hurting him so much. He was an eye witness how our closest were killed. Uh...He was a doctor and...uh... he had to flee Krakau where he was practicing ...uh...medicine when the war broke out in 1939, and he came to Kolomier, where he was born. He was the oldest. And...uh...he...he described...he never wanted to talk about it but when he passed away among his...uh...papers, I found a letter reporting what has happened to the family and then... then one nice day, when he is not anymore here maybe I will have it and I will be the one that has to not let the world forget what has happened to us during the Hitler time. In the beginning when the Germans came in, after the Russians left, was occupied by the Russians, they...uh...took my... my sister's apartment away. Uh...They...uh...they had to go to the ghetto and...uh...everything...everything was...uh... uh...taken...taken away. Uh...They were left just with what they could carry in their hand. And only one person, as my brother worked for the Germans in the hospital for infectious diseases, the Germans didn't want to put one of their doctors in for the danger, so they left there for the time being a Jew doing that work. So he had the right to live outside of the ghetto, and one person with him who would take care of the things in case he isn't there. So once my mother used to be there or my sister. They came out in order to have a bigger piece of bread because it wasn't even allowed to put a piece of bread into the...into the ghetto. And...uh...he smuggled always a piece of bread in and he could risk his life that could be shot for that. But so once my mother had something to eat. Once my mother had a little more...more bread. And the children, it had to be smuggled in. Then it didn't take very long and my sister was taken away under the...under the...that she will be...uh...uh...how do they call? Resettled. And never came back. She was taken to Belzec. Then one nice day, the 2nd of February, 1943, my sister was taken away Oshamaraba, 1942. And then...the 2nd of February of...of 1943...uh... my mother was taken out with the last 2,000 taken to Sheparowitz not far away from Kolomier, 11 kilometers as far as I know and there were already graves, mass graves prepared and she was shot and killed there. When my brother came back evenings to this apartment where he had his so-called practice, Ukrainians were at the door and laughed him in his face. What? That's your apartment? You must dream. He had night service and he came in the morning. And so they



turned him back. Few days later he heard that he should be replaced by a Polish woman doctor, should be finished up because there were only 4, 3 or 4 left of them in the whole city. During the Russian occupation, he helped a Polish woman...uh...professor of a gymnasium...uh... She...her father was a rich man. Had a lot of land, and her brother was a priest. They were taken and never heard of them when the Russians came. And she was...got out of that village in order to find work so that she wouldn't be taken without work into captivity. And she came to him without knowing him, and he was the manager of the hospital under the Russians before the Germans came in, and cried before him what should she do? So he asked her, "Can you be a cook? We need a cook." And she start to be the cook for the hospital. She never forgot that. When the Germans came, she...uh...made...in her...in her apartment, they're living Italian officers. One was a doctor with the same specialty, Dr. Rugoni, and she told him about my brother, that she heard that he is going to be replaced. So he told her, "Let him come to me." And that same day, afternoon, he took all his things off from him, and went to the Italian...uh... to the Italian soldier, to the barracks of the Italians, and there he was hiding him and they...their conversation was in Latin...whatever was necessary. And he said he should not talk and he should make he cannot speak, that he was for Stalingrad. He will say he was Stalingrad, and came out numb and dumb. Cannot hear, cannot talk, because he didn't talk Italian. Smuggled him into Italy and he worked for him in Kosavecura, the doctor \_\_\_\_\_. And from there, he started to look for me and I start look for him and through cousins in Israel, we were reunited in 1951. My brother had trouble with the American doctors. They said, "He probably has tuberculosis," and they kept him for 1 year back, and he was not on the German quota so I came in 1947. He came in June 51 to the...to...to Chicago. So we were reunited. He lived with me for 20 years. He wouldn't get married because of circumstances and...uh...and he...it took him 7 years again in Chicago to get a license. He had to go all everything through and internship which we went through and...uh...he practiced for 10 years medicine in Chicago until...then he was retired for 1 and a half or 2 years and...uh...he had a heart condition, but that didn't kill him. But he got cancer of the colon and he passed away in 1971, at the age of 73. And...uh...more details about it...it is in his...uh...document left to me...uh...about his...how he survived and how the circumstances how my family lived the last few months and...uh...

Q: We'll get that.

A: Hmmm?

Q: We'll get that.

A: Yal. This is...uh...this is all I...all I have to tell you about my brother in short.

Q: Thank you very much. Hold this. I want to show some pictures. Okay. Can you hold that. I'm gonna...

A: The picture. The other things.

A: This picture was taken in 1917 during the first world war. My brother got furlough after being for quite sometime as a front line, and surprised us for 14 days to be with us. My mother here on the picture was killed in February 1943. My sister and her children, husband were killed in 1942 somewhere in October. And...uh...the only survivor today as the picture is shown to you here am I.

Then my brother left Kolomier or was smuggled out by the Italian officer. This what I have in my hands is the only one thing he had with him and what he had on.

Q: I want you to tell us what it is. You see we don't know we're looking at, so let's back....

A: Okay.

Q: Start it from the beginning.

A: Do I have to start again?

Q: Yes. Start again.

A: This is the only one thing that my brother took with him when he was smuggled out from Kolomier to Italy by the Italian officer and doctor. It is the medical bag that he used to treat the patients in the German hospital.

At the Hebrew University, I met a professor by the name of Docnoyee.

Q: Excuse me. We're going to have to stop. Okay. Let's hold it. Can't do it. Okay. Wait til he tell's we're ready.

A: The picture you see here is by the Germans that ruled Kolomier during the German occupation and caused all these trouble and killings of Jews. This was given to me by Professor Docnoyee from the Hebrew University who was born in Kolomier like my parents. That's it. That's it.

Q: That's...that's really all you need. That's all you need. You don't need any more.