

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Morris Kornberg
March 15, 1990
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Morris Kornberg, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on March 15, 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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MORRIS KORNBERG

March 15, 1990

Q: Tell me your... Would you tell me your name please?

A: My name is Morris Kornberg. I was born in January 6, 1918--in Przedborz, Poland.

Q: Tell me about your family.

A: Um, I had then my parents, they have been...uh...in business. I had...uh...four brothers, and two sisters. I was the youngest. My eldest brother took over the business from my parents. As far as I remember, this was in 1938. And we have been connected all the time with...uh...different kind business. Mostly business...my brother used to supply the factories raw material, and so forth...so forth. My oldest sister was married. She had three kids; two boys, one girl. The oldest girl--was at this time in '39--she was 8 years old. Then the other two boys must have been 5 and 3. And then I had one brother who left Poland in 1933. He went to Israel from a kibbutz. Then was another sister. She was still single. Then I had another brother. And I was the youngest in all.

Q: Tell me about your childhood, with your brothers and sisters.

A: As far as I remember of my childhood, I used... My parents were strictly Orthodox people; but we have been four brothers at home. 'Til about 14, 15 years old, we all attended Jewish schools and never went even to a public schools; because our parents had been so religious. They always sent us to Jewish schools. Private...actually, a teacher--a private teacher. A Rabbi, more or less. And we took also, beside...uh... languages--like Polish, or other modern languages. What I studied was only private...private. And as I remember, when I was 15 years old; and then the parents let us more or less do it our own way. We didn't go anymore with...uh...my father, like we used to every Sabbos [**NB:** Shabbat] to the shtievel [**Yiddish:** "house" (of worship?)], und so weiter [**Yiddish or German:** "and so forth"]. But...uh, we...we have been allowed more or less to go our own way, in some degree. But we always have been understanding..., we tried to be good kids. Not to embarrass...uh... So I belonged to...uh...Jewish organization. It actually a...a sport...um, like a sports organization; but it was a religious sport organization. I used to help around at home, with business. It was assigned to do...uh...all, uh...different things, whatever; I always helped around. Whatever they asked me, I always did, so forth. And in the evening, we used to spend in the Zionist Organization, where we...we...we learned Hebrew and once a week we had some dancing, and so forth. More modern life. This went on, more or less, all my years; 'til actually the German, when they came in 1939. I think it was the first of...uh...September. The first day when they came in, right away the whole town run away. Because we had been afraid, actually, of Germans; and we went to the woods. And we had been for two, three days in the woods all around. And the time come, we went back home. This...the town, the little town, was about 70 percent was burned out; but our house was still standing. The business, everything, was still

like normal. We tried to adjust ourselves to a normal life. As I can remember, right away from the beginning...uh...was like a...a law. The German called a "Kommissar"--who was in charge of the little town--called us over; and he said that we all, from 13...age from 13 'til 50, will have to perform labor. Every day, we have to go to the...to do some work. So we used to go to the...the Jewish Kulturgemeinde. Over there, we have been assigned; like mostly cleaning, taking away old brick, cleaning up areas. Didn't make any different. But in the evening, we have been allowed to go back at home. Later on, they assigned me--mostly in mine age, from the city--to a Steinbruch [NB: "quarry"] We used to mine stones; those stones have been for the...for the roads. They built new road, and so those stones went to the roads. And so this was pretty heavy work, everything. But still, I was pretty young and healthy, and I got adjusted. And I...and I did my work. I have the two other brothers--because he was always in business. And at this time, the German government...they needed...base...steel basement materials--steel. My oldest brother was always in contact with big manufacturer, Jewish people, who used to have supply from all kinds steel metal. And if he supplied so many pounds--I don't....cannot recall the amount--you...you got a grüne binde [NB: "green band"]. Start to wear the white and blue armband, so you got a green band. A green band meant that you could go outside the ghetto. You could travel. You could use the trains. And you have...you have been restricted, but you still had a little bit freedom. So then my oldest brother saw that my youngest--uh, my older brother from me, the second brother--had a grüne binde, too. So we didn't have to go to work every day, like the steinbruch, and do all public kind of works. And happened to be...our parents, they had a factory with a partner, with a gentile people. Poles. In the beginning, we didn't even wanted to go down to the factory; because it was everything under his name, more or less. We didn't want it to know...the Germans know that this our property, half was our property of the factory. Because we know it if it is Jewish property, was confiscated. But the owner from the prop...from the partner from the factory, our partner the owner was arrested in 1940. This was with the first Polish intelligent[sia] what they took away. They arrested him. Two weeks later, came a notice that he did not survive. The clothing came back home, and he was not alive anymore. And the factory was not running right with nobody to manage, so forth. So my brother, through...he had some friends who had contact with the Gestapo. And for money, they could make it that it's not for myself to go to every day to work for Zwangs [NB: "compulsory"] labor to be assigned... to have my assignment; my labor should be to the factory. We lived already in a ghetto. The factory was on the other side in the town, also out the ghetto. So I got a I.D. card from Gestapo, that I can go..cross every day to the factory. Cross ...I go outside the ghetto, and be over there. We came... So I were came to the factory. My brother used to supply raw materials, because you couldn't get it at this time raw materials from the German. You have to have a special permission, actually. But my brother had connection; and we could produce again knives, spoons, forks...whatever we manufactured over there. But it was a problem that the...same way, labor. You couldn't pay a labor[er] more than the price from before the war prices, more or less. And nobody wanted to work, because everything was already like black market. Except what you got your rations. Right away, Jewish people never got any rations. So the problem was that nobody wanted to work. Then my brother told me to try to tell those people who used to work in the factory that we will pay them 2, 3 times as much [as] whatever is allowed by the law. And he

will be able to sell the merchandise to some friends, who had Jewish people stores; what he could given them a bill and he will actually get paid three times as much, too, for the merchandise. This went on...and I used to be always in the factory, and this went on for quite a long time. Apparently, over a year. It happened to be that one of the workers in the factory, he was some dissatisfied--not with me, but with the ...with the lady from our partner. And he went...he went to the Gestapo; and he said that the whole factory belongs, actually, to us. The factory belongs to us. Whatever we used manufacturing, we had been always afraid that something can happen this week, or next week or [the] next week. We used to carry away finished merchandise; and it was over there he used to carry the finished material to the railroads. So he lived in our village. He had a barn where he used to carry finished merchandise to his barn, too. Well, one day, I remember...it must have been like the middle of August. I cannot recall exactly, but...uh...more or less in August. It was on a Saturday. And I was trying in...at home they told me, "You stay. Don't stay home in the ghetto. Keep on trying to sleep over there. Live over there in the factory." They always chased me to go out from the ghetto to be in the factory. This was a bridge...a bridge, you know, to cross the ghetto. I came on the bridge; I remember it was guarded by Gendarmerie. Not by Gestapo, but by Gendarmerie. And I knowed him; and he knowed me very well, too. His name was [Achtler (ph)]. I still remember. Because he used to come to the factory before Christmastime, and he used to wanted to send home some knives or whatever we produce in the factory. And we used to give him for free. So he always was on very friendly terms. And I came to the bridge to cross the ghetto. He says, uh, "Ausweis." And I knowed right away that something is not right, because I know him and he knowed me. And when he asked me this; and I laughed, and I took out my Ausweis and I gave it to him. And he tore up my Ausweis. And he said, "Du zist...du bist selbig scheiss Jude wie jede andere. Wenn die Mal probies das ghetto [geschitten (ph)], dann ein Kugel in dem Kopf."¹ And it means that he will shot me. And I went home.

Q: Will you tell us what that meant.

A: This meant that...uh...that I am exactly like any other dirty Jew. I am the same, and I don't have any right to cross the ghetto. And if I am going to try to go over the bridge to cross the ghetto, I will be shot. I turned back and went home; and I told them. My...My oldest brother was always travelling; but this...this day he was home. It was on a Saturday. And when I told them, my parents...everybody got very upset. And my oldest brother said to my father and to me, he said, "Don't worry, Moishe. We find a way that...that ...that the Gendarmerie will not have any...anything to do with you." Although at this time, actually, they had already conflicts with the Russians. Was in '41. And...and they... they started. They wanted to take over the factory. The SS wanted to take over the factory to build barracks, that they can send those barracks to Russia for their soldiers. And if the factory will belong under SS...uh...supervision, so nobody would have any right to touch me. "You will be over there.

¹ **Translation from the German:** "You are the self-same shitty Jew as any other. When the mark tries [to sneak out of] the ghetto, then a shot in the head."

You will do your work, whatever they assign you to do it." OK. This was all. So we waited...Monday, Tuesday. On Tuesday, came a Polish policeman. They had been together with the Gendarmerie, but they didn't have no arms. And he came over, he came to our house where we lived in the ghetto. And he said...uh, to me, "Mr. Kornberg," he says, "You are...you are asked to come to the Gendarmerie over there for questioning." And right away my parents looked at me, and very upset and everything. And I said, "Don't worry. I be alright. I be back." I came down to Gendarme...to Gendarmerie...because in our...it was a small town. We didn't have any SS in the town. But once a month, came from Radom came Gestapo and SS, if they have any cases to take care, or whatever. And I was called in. It was a very high SS. And he had about 10, 12 pages; and he keeps on asking me, "Are you working...you work in the factory?" I said, "Yes." And he said, "You have double books." We had to have double books, because the original what we paid them. One set books what we original paid; one set books for the German government, to show it what we had been allowed to pay them. And he kept on asking me again questions, with finished merchandised and where it's hidden in the barn, and so forth. And I know it... saw it right away that he knows more what is going on than I even myself knowed it. Right away, he called in a kapo Gestapo--or SS...I don't know--and they start to beat me. And they beat me so bad, so hard. And I was constantly on the floor. And he was an elderly SS, the man. So I was always on the floor; and I went one time in and start to kiss his boot. I said, "Please, shot me. Please." He said, "You will be shot, anyway. You don't have to worry about this. But first we get the whole truth out from you." And I kept passing out from beating. So they took me down. Outside the building was...uh...a pump; because it was not inside...uh...was not water inside the building. You have to go outside, if you wanted water. They put my head behind the pump. They pumped water; and as soon I came back, they took me in again to beatings and beatings and beatings. And my back was completely black, everything. The whole body, practically. And they took me...it was a small prison, a small town. They called this...not a regular prison. They called it a "koza" [**Pol:** "lock-up" or "clink"]. And I was sitting over there. And the guy who was in charge, a Pole...Polak who was charge over this. He knowed me. He knowed the family. He knowed everybody. So he came over in secret, and he telled me, "Whatever you want it, you just tell me. And I get in contact with your family, and you'll get it." And he said, "You want write something home?" So, yes, I remembered one thing; and I wrote it home. And I know it that everybody was still home--my brothers, and whole family. And I told them... One thing I didn't told them, that I was beaten so bad. But I said, "Please, one favor I want it from you. Just forget about me." (Crying) The next day they sent me to Ko_skie. Ko_skie... this was the next town about 30 miles from Przedborz; and over there, it was a larger town. It was already a regular prison. And they put me in prison. I came over there. They...first they took me to the...uh...Gestapo, to...uh... I was only afraid for beating again; and I said do anything. But I nev...I was not beaten anymore. And I was put in normal prison. I came in the prison. It was something. You know, that when you come in...a newcomer comes in, everybody makes fun, or whatever. And they saw me--those old prisoners actually, mostly Poles. Gentile. And when they saw me, I could hardly walk already. And I didn't know what to say, what not to say. So they stopped joking, and they came talking to me more less serious. And they asked me what is happened, why I am here. I told them, more or less. So they start, in some degree, respecting me a little bit. They

didn't...normally a newcomer comes in, get beat up in a prison, so forth. They didn't beat me, nothing. And in fact, every day normally they...you supposed--because it was not toilets equipped over there. You...we had...we had a large can, whatever. Whatever your normal thing you had to do, you did in the can. In the morning, had to be carried out and cleaned; scraped the floors, and everything. So they even pushed me away. They told me I don't have to do this. And I was over there for 4 weeks. I remember one time they brought, into the same prison, three butchers. They caught them butchering, or whatever. And they have been very...they had been in prison almost like religious. They constantly prayed and prayed. One morning, they called them out; and I could hear--the other already told me--and I could hear shoot... shooting. And the other told me, "Here, they are shooting over here. Bullets. You know, rifles." They got shot over there. Well, I was the only...again the only Jew over there in this prison. And the owner from our partner--the woman-- she was arrested, too, when I was arrested. And she was in the same jail in Ko_skie. And, apparently, when she was released she could scream in; you know, to call my name. It must have been that woman quarters was not far away. And she the same way called my name; and I said, "Yes!" And she told me she is Frau Wiczitska, Mrs. Wiczitska. She says that she is free, she goes home; and she knows that I will be free, too. Just waiting for a high official from the SS to sign mine papers for freedom to go home. Now everybody came over from the jail; they told me to go see their relatives, and this and this. To tell greetings, or this and this. And I was sure 100 percent that I go tomorrow. I will be released. But the next morning, was called off by names. My name was also called off; and I came out. I didn't know it what is, if to be released or not released. They took us all in a truck. They drove us...uh...I believe nach [Yidd or Ger: "to"] Kielce or nach Radom.² A bigger city. And from all prisons from the whole area. They took all prisoners out from the prisons. We came the city where we have been. I don't know exactly this. I just mention Radom or the Kielce. They sent us out on a market, on the street where the market was. I know it that was quite...come more trucks, more trucks; more prisoners and more prisoners. And all around us was Gestapo and SS with machines and rifles around us. We all have been...like our hand tied with strings, just tied. We had to lay down with the head down on this. So finally, a couple of years, when they had all those prisoners around, then...meant that we go to the railroad. They marched us to the railroad. We went to rail...to cattle wagons. And same way, I didn't know it; nobody knewed where they take us. What they take us. Wherever. Some from the...from the guards, they said, "Oh, you go to work somewhere." And we thought, oh, the same way--we go where to work. But in the evening when it was dark, late at night, we finally arrived. And I still remember, we saw this...uh... Before the train went in, it slowed down over there. And we could see a sign, and it read: "Arbeit Macht Frei." And I never know it, about Auschwitz. And I didn't know that this was Auschwitz. But finally we got to know. And we came in. As soon as they opened the wagons, it start the beating right away. The Gestapo and SS, they have been stayed around wagons. And whoever passed by, didn't make any different, was no other choice than beating, beating, beating. And finally we came into the camp; and then we saw already those...uh...concentration camps uniforms, striped ones. We all saw kapos; and

² The Auschwitz Chronicle indicates that it was Radom.

they start to tell us, "Here's Auschwitz." And they told us, "Here you cannot live long. If you live a day or you live two days, it is about all how long you live here." The same way, they kept on chasing us, beating us, chasing us, beating us. And I went...they took the pictures of me, like a criminal from all ends--odds and ends. They took my clothing. They told me to put in a bag, where it was written my name. Then we went...they shaved our head. Then, always beating. Wherever you go, every step. Then we went to "Disinfection." It was a huge big barrel full of chlorine, water with chlorine. They throwed us in over there. And this meant "disinfected." Then it meant that we should go for clothing. I mean, the same way... Wherever you went, wherever you step you made, kept on beating and beating. They gave me--I am a small size. They gave me the largest size, whatever they could find it. For a large person, they gave the smaller size--whatever they could find it. And the same way, like they didn't gave us shoes; but they gave us...uh...wooden shoes. Wooden shoes. And you...and if you have to be used to be able to walk in wooden shoes. If you are not used, you cannot walk, practically. And the same way: beating, beating, constantly. And we saw already people laying dead; they were everywhere piled up, piled up. And who was not dead, is 99 percent already dead. Looks like dead. And we saw it is...doesn't make any different. It's no use to fight for nothing. Whatever they want beat, let them beat it; what sooner is better. Finally, they set up a table. A large table. And they said they're gonna feed us. This was around the evening. So they brought a couple...uh...barrels with soup. The soup was terrible hot. It was more water, actually, than what they called it--soup. And then they had...for so many people, they had maybe 30 or 40...uh... What do you call it? Uh, soup...soupen dishes, for soup something. So you went over. Every time, every step, you have to be beaten. This was normal. So you went over to get soup. You went over. They gave you a cup with the soup to your dish, and you walked about 18 or 30 feet. This was the end of the table. You had to leave the dish for the next person. If you could, drink it down hot. [E]special was real boiling; probably, intentionally boiling. If you...some poured in--I don't remember, I probably poured in myself the same way--and you had to leave your dish, that's all. And then they called us, after they gave us the soup; but 90 percent, practically, couldn't...had a chance to take it, whatever, the hot water. Then it...they called us [into] "Appell." They...they said...we...stood in the "Appell." Was the first thing came a high officer, a SS officer. And he says, "Juden, austreten!"--"Jews to step out!" It was a fact in the whole transport, it was 4, 5 thousand. Was eight Jews in the whole transport. Right away, we could notice that we are treated already different, practically. We didn't care. We knowed this: that if you are gentile, you didn't survive; if you are Jewish, you less survive. That's all. Finally, it got dark. They told us we could go to the barracks. So we went into the barracks. It was three-story bunks. And the same thing: we have to jump right away, catch a... a bunk bed, lay down. It was so many insects where we slept over there, I was beaten up. My whole body was red from beaten up insects, whatever they had it over there, in this block. And in the morning, the same way as we were, we asked if there is--you are human--if a toilet, or whatever. So they showed us...it was from canalization, was covers like in the street. About five, six covers. They say you take away the cover, and over there you got... The Kapo counts five. You have to be ready. It doesn't make any different how, but you have to be ready after five for the next one. The same way. We saw it the same thing. Then they gave us...they start to...to register us, take names...all kinds. And they gave us a number. Because you didn't had

anymore a name. They called you only, like a dog or any animal, by number. And they gave us...my number was 62,465.³ They gave us to write...to sew up on the uniform what we had, the prison uniform. And we know it right away. It doesn't make any different. Whatever it will be, we through. But around 12 o'clock...12, 1 o'clock, before lunch, they called "Juden, eintreten!"--"Jews to step forwards!" Over there. And I didn't know it what they're gonna do, if they're gonna shoot us or whatever. There came a doctor--a high...a high SS officer, a doctor. And he checked our health and everything. Looked us through, without clothing; put us in the side. And right away, those kapos told us, "Oh, you are lucky ones! You...you gonna go out in a subcamp in Auschwitz. You go to Jawischowitz."⁴ We...we had to go to the Kleidungskammer [Ger: "Clothing Room"]. Is where you get your clothing. We got different clothing. We gave up the old clothing, what they gave us the day before. They gave us more suitable clothing. They gave us leather shoes. Then came a couple SS officers. Guards. And they said...they took us...I think it was--uh, from the eight, I think six of us from the eight was--six Jews, and he had maybe eight more Reichs Germans. And he marched us those few kilometers to Jawischowitz. Jawischowitz was a brand new camp. We came in right away, we didn't see no Kapos, no killings, no beatings. And it was...a...a Lagerältester. He was a German, a very decent person. He was himself a prisoner. Then was...from the office-- "Schreibstube," we called it. And he was German; very, very nice person. His name was Carl [Krimmer (ph)]. Very nice person. And he told us right away, "Here is no Kapos, no beatings, no nothing. The only thing is, here you have to go everyday to work. We treat you right. We feed you right. And if you work in the coal mine, you go in the coal mine... You gonna work in the coal mine, then this is all what we ask you." In a few hours, the director from the coal mine came--a German. He had a speech. He was very well dressed and everything; he talked very nice to us. And he said that he will be responsible for us, that nobody can beat us or whatever. And, uh...we gonna be fed right, and we're gonna be treated right; but he one thing expect us, to do the work. He needs the work. We have to do the work. And he says that "You'll be able..." I was assigned for nacht--the night shift. He said, "Daytime, you come home; you have a nice bed, a clean block. You come from the coal mine, you got showers." They got brand new showers, everything. "You take a shower. You go back. You get food. Then you go to sleep, and nobody will disturb you. You will be asleep 'til the next evening, you have to go back to the mine." And this was true enough, 'til about 1942--I don't remember exactly the month--when they start to get the Jewish transport. I remember the first Jewish transport was from Belgium. The numbers started with 66,000. Very nice people, decent people. And we...we still didn't know it, that they take every Jews away in Poland, or so forth, for transport. We had been treated every day a little bit less good, because it was more people. It was room for 200, but more people...they used to bring in. If they brought 7, 8 hundred, the room...the blocks was the same thing. They just more

³ The Auschwitz Chronicle indicates that this prisoner number was assigned on September 1, 1942.

⁴ Subcamp of Auschwitz. Located at Jawiszowice, several kilometers SSW from the site of Auschwitz I. See attached map.

crowded. And the food practically was the same thing, you know. So they just had to give you less. This was the beginning. 67,000 came the next--this was from Holland. I have a lot of friends from over there. The same way with more people, that less start to disappear. Then, I remember, came the first transport from Poland. They have been 77,000. And they already start to tell us what...how everything is home. That they just..everybody wait. And that's the end of it, they emptied the ghettos. In the...our camp, what used in the beginning was our model, got to the point actually--with another month, another month--was worse and worse and worse and worse. And they called it already like a Straflager [**Ger:** "punishment camp"]. Only, like if somebody did something wrong in a regular concentration camp, they sent him to the coal mine to get it to be worse. And... but I was already a good worker in the coal mine. I knowed over there Poles. And they respect me, because I did my work real good. Once in awhile, they used to bring me my sandwich they give me. Because the Poles, they have...uh...when they got the help, they always used to get a prisoner--an inmate--as a helper. And they assigned...whatever they assigned per person, so much to do it. Like I was in night shift; so the night we didn't...uh...dug coals. We just reinforced, that it doesn't break through. So they used to send down stones and we used to throw in stones and build up with wood. You know, builds...and we told them that this holds up, that it doesn't ...uh...breaks through. This was our job. I think we had about like 2 meter hoych [**Yidd:** "height"], and 5 meter long, and 4 meter deep, to fill up with stones. And this is 20...I still remember, 20 small wagons. This was more or less assigned. And if the Poles, he got you...he got to do double. If you couldn't do it, they didn't let him out...go out the shift--the shaft, 'til his work was completed. So they used to get mad; and they used to beat up those old inmates, because they had to do the work for them. And they respect me. If I help somebody, I gave him the full work, whatever I have to do it. You didn't have to do for me. And so they once in awhile brought me a little bit...a sandwich, and so forth. And this helped. And I got acquainted; and they always said that "You are better than the other ones." The other used to be beaten up, and all kinds. But in the wintertime was very rough, because the SS used to march us. The coal mine used to be in Brzeszcze. Brzeszcze was again about four kilometers...four, five kilometres from Jawischowitz, from the camp. And we used to get SS guards, and they marched us to the coal mine. And they marched us...they always screamed to hold...uh...likes to march like soldiers. Their foot Schritt [**German:** "step"] had to be the same, always like a soldier; and sing German songs, always. Nothing. And I remember even, the Lagerführer from Jawischowitz were...he was a Volksdeutsche. His name was Kowol. Uh, war a [gundsgert (ph)] [**Yiddish:** "He was a _____"]...he was a good murder[er], but he still was not the worst murder[er]. He used to scream and everything, but not... But one time, I remember...uh, a young boy from Holland. His name was Pollack. And he couldn't keep up with this footsteps like soldiers, like he wanted. And he [**NB:** Kowol] watched it; so he kicked him to death, so forth. But when we came down to the coal mine, the coal mine was about 1500...uh...feet deep--435 meter deep-- where we worked. And the coal mine, we felt, uh...like a paradise almost. We had to work, everything; but at least you didn't have no kapos. You didn't have no SS. You didn't have no walk. We felt practically good about it. But in the wintertime, when it rained...the weather was bad, it snowed, it rained. And the SS didn't want it to stay so long; because we had to go in to take a lamp. You have always to go in to take a lamp. You had a coal mine lamp. Mine coal mine lamp was 118. I still

remember. You said that your number is 118. They gave you the number. You have been responsible, 'cause you had to bring back the lamp. The lamp was very heavy. You could hardly drag it. But you have to bring it back. If you didn't brought it back, they finish you off. It means that you had sabotaged. And who gave out those lamps, was a kapo ...Poles, gentiles, who work over there. And very young kids--maybe 16, 17 year-old kids. And then came French...who spoke only French, who spoke only Yugoslav, who spoke only uh Czech. And they told them their number. They didn't know it. And they just laughed and said, "You should take longer, actually." And meanwhile, the SS got rough; and beat us up, roughed us up, kicked us up. Because they had been mad. They didn't want to stay. And one was a...uh...inmate. He was a Reichsdeutsche, a German. And he couldn't see it anymore, you know, to going down...down in the mine, and to work in the mine and be...beaten up so bad and kicked so bad. And so he came over to me. I was in the same block with him. He was more or less like a Kapo, responsible for the shift--for the night shift. And he came over to me. I...I was not sleeping, probably, wherever he was slept in the same block. And he said, "You speak Polish, no?" I said, "Sure." He says, "Maybe, you know, when you see his number, you're gonna used to the names and you can tell those boys in Polish the number. It will get used, that they will go a little bit faster." I told him, "I can try." And at this time, I was young. And had a very good memory, too, I remember. And they tried out with me, what it used to take three quarters of an hour or an hour. In the beginning, it was a little bit hard for me. But I still speeded up in half, and so forth. And everyday was always the same faces and the same numbers--the Häftling numbers. I got used to it that actually I looked at the face or at this number, and I knowed the coal mine mine number already. And I ask... And I used to cut this down to about...in no time--to a half hour, 15 minutes--practically impossible. And I got to be famous over there for this. And the SS...and they know it. And they start the same way to talk to me, being nice. I didn't have to march anymore; work like I wanted. And once in awhile they used to even to bring me a sandwich, even. To get me... You know, that nobody sees it, I should hide it. And this went on; and I did my job, whatever I could. And I was pleased that the beating stopped a little bit. But in the coal mine...in the camp, started to worse and worse and worse. And they used to get it the same way. Every month, they used to get in another transport actually. So they didn't need it any more people. They didn't care. So every month...month, it was a selection. Uh, a high SS doctor came--officer--came from Auschwitz. We had to go through in the evening without clothing, everything. And as soon somebody saw it is undernourished, so forth, he put him in the side; and right away to the crematorium. The trucks came the next day, and took them over. But they got always new transports. So it was never a shortage in labor anymore. Uh...

Q: Okay. At this point. Let's stop. We need to pause and change tapes, so it's a good time to break.

A: Okay.

TAPE #2

- A: [...that he will call off 20 names.] **[TEXT IN PRECEDING BRACKETS DOES NOT APPEAR ON VIDEOTAPE]** And he will tell me the...the...the Häftlings number--you know, the prison[er] number. And I should tell them the Kohlengrube [**German:** "coal mine"] number.
- Q: Uh, what's a "Kohlengrube"?
- A: Uh, the coal mine.
- Q: Oh, okay.
- A: Coal mine number. I was scared. I said, "I can try." And I passed it. I made it. So he took me to the kitchen. He gave me a whole bread and a whole sausage. This was like, somebody is... (Pointing at camera) He wants you to start again.
- Q: Okay, we're ready. Let's start with it. Did they then... I just need to know something for briefly. Was it after that point that they took you out of the coal mines permanently?
- A: [Yah. They took me out and I stayed in the...in the Lager.
- Q: You stayed in the lager.
- A: For a long...I did perform like in the schreiber.] **[TEXT IN PRECEDING BRACKETS IS NOT ON THE VIDEOTAPE]** I kept the books in the SS for the coal mines. Something like this.
- Q: Okay. When they start the cameras again, let's start with that story. Okay. Let's pick up at this point when you are called out of the...out of the coal mines. I'll ask you how you got out of the coal mines.
- A: Where should I pick up? Where...
- Q: When you're called out of the...out of the coal mine.
- A: Oh.
- Q: I'll ask you how you got out of the coal mine. I'll ask you that question. Okay. Will you tell us how you got out of the coal mines.
- A: Yes. After I was helping by distributing the lamps. And apparently the guards told the Lagerführer, Kowol, about that I helped speed up with the giving out the lamps. One morning, I was at the "appell." I was called out to come to the Schriebstube. Normally, when

they called you out to go to the Schreibstube meant you did something wrong--you didn't perform your job in the coal mines, so forth. So they beat you up. Real beat you up! I know it that I was a real good worker, was famous to be a real good worker in the coal mine. I didn't do nothing wrong, and I couldn't understand why they called me to the Schreibstube. So I came to the Schreibstube. I went in; and I was shivering, practically. And I saw the Lagerführer; and I took off my cap, and I told him my number. You know, that I came to the Schreibstube [messen (ph)]. And he screamed at me...screamed, "[Recheche (ph)] Jude!"-- "Dirty Jew!" And all kind names. "[Alles mäderer (ph)]!" And I was shivering over there. But I...Carl [Krimmer (ph)], the arbeit [NB: "worker"] in the Schreibstube, [Phrase given in Yiddish, not decipherable]. He showed me that I shouldn't be scared. I should calm down. Finally, he [NB: Kowol] start to ask me questions to where I am from my home...with my home, what my parents did, what I did. And I told him. Then I couldn't figure it out. I says, "What does he wanted from me? I gonna be released? Maybe my brother...some bribed somebody, or whatever." Then he said, "You helping out those boys giving out those lamps." I said, "Yes." He said, "If I will call 20 names, I will tell you the prison number--the KZ number. Can you tell me the coal mine number?" I was scared. I said, "I can try." So he brought the book, and he called off those names; and I could finish...could tell him all names from the coal mine the numbers. He was very impressed with me. So he called me in to the kitchen. He said to follow him. We went into the kitchen. He told the chef from the kitchen to bring out a bread. A whole loaf of bread! And a whole big sausage. And he said, "Hide it...to behind..." To hide it behind my uniform. And when I came in...in the block, the other had been already asleep. Except my friends, what I been very close with them. They had been so scared that I get beaten to death, or whatsoever. And they stood, and **they** shivered. And I go to the bed; and I pull out the bread, and I pull out the sausage. This was probably more than 50--not millions, but billion--dollars, to say it for us. We divided with each other. And it was unbelievable. After a week, two, then by the "appell," the same way the Lagerführer called my name; and he said I don't go anymore to the coal mine. I should be... work in the camp. So he want me that I take care of the books in the coal mine with the SS. Because the coal mine paid the SS [the] salary for all prisoners. The KZ prisoners. I kept those books. And I had to go every day, count how many people in each block; and give...uh...the amount to the kitchen, that they can...what they prepare more or less food. So they know it how much food, whatever, to prepare. And they told me that I can go take a bath whenever I wanted, a shower, so forth. And I will get better food. I don't have to eat food with every prisoner, when they come. I get the food. And the same way in the block. Nobody will bother me, and so forth. But it was one...uh...Blockführer, he was a SS. He used to inspect the blocks. He was a...from Rumania, an SS. His name was [Drashner (ph)]. And, I remember, he always... He know that the Lagerführer more or less liked me, in some degree. And he...when nobody saw it, he used to beat me. I always was mad. I had in the coal mine...I didn't hate it. I got...was used to work, and I was treated by the Polaks--by the civil-- pretty good; and I didn't have it so bad. And I said, "Why didn't I stay in the coal mine, where there better than this be here? Be always for him..." He always used to say that I'm a... Because I did...I had the paper work to do with the books; and he said that I'm...uh...a spy. He always came and checked my papers, and look behind...uh...my mattress, to see if he can find something there--a spy. Later, when I requested that I want to go back to the coal

mine, he says, "See, he is a spy! Because who had it so nice, who... Why does he want it to go back to the coal mine?" Is what he said to the other SS. And they used to have fight with each other. The [Drashner (ph)] with the Lagerführer. He even went to the higher Gestapo, and he told them that he [NB: Kowol] neglects the camp. He runs around with woman. He always drunk...and he like me. He likes me. He doesn't bother... You know, something killing, so forth. So they even transferred him to some elsewhere. I don't know where. And it came...from Auschwitz, came another SS Lagerführer for the camp. For some reason, this went on for awhile. And I was assigned back to the coal mine. I went back to the coal mine; but they all, from the camp, and the workers...they all respect me. They all used to help me. Like, uh, from the Bekleidungskammer, [where] they give out the Kleidungs [Ger: "clothing"]. Paul Leventhal--es leben gebliben; es ein gans grösse [Yiddish: "he survived, he's a fat goose"]... He's a big man in...in the Czechoslovakai [NB: Czechoslovakia]. Yeah. And [Von Baden (ph)], [undecipherable Yiddish phrase]. They all know me. So they used to help me some degree. And I went back to the coal mine, and I worked over there again until the end of '44. This was around December, when the Russian invasion started. Then suddenly they said that we're gonna be evacuated. The...those all who worked in the camp, the besserer--those who had been treated better a little bit--we already talk maybe to escape...to try to dig a bunker or whatever. But it didn't materialize, because the time was too short. We had been scared a little bit, too. And finally, the end of '44-- it was around Christmastime--they evacuate us.⁵ We had been told to take our clothing and one blanket, and take it along. So we marched until...through the night, all night; they even ...they let us rest a little bit. We laid down in the snow. It was snow already on the ground. And the next day, finally, they put us on cattle wagons; and they brought us to Buchenwald. In...from Buchenwald, they sent me again to Tröglitz--a subcamp in Buchenwald. This was Tröglitz.⁶ This was not far away from Leipzig, where I met over there a friend from me--he is from Leipzig--who lives also in Washington. His name is Bernard Federman. We kept a little bit together more or less. But this Tröglitz was terrible. It was like...uh....no work, no food, no bath. In Auschwitz, we used to be very clean. They used to kill you if you didn't kept...didn't kept yourself clean. And Tröglitz was just the opposite. Whatever you were in, you wore. In the same way, even to work...when they took us to work, they... It was over there...uh...a refinery where they used to make gasoline and coals, the Germans. And the refinery was bombardiered--was bombed through the Allies. They made us clean up today, from here to this area. The next day they took us...told us to take back from over there to go back to this area. They just make us miserable so bad. And the little food what they gave us, terrible. They didn't have even water. Even somebody want to wash themself didn't get even no water. In the beginning, we used to take our black water, whatever they called it--"coffee"--what we got in the morning. Our ration. We used to wash ourself. We sacrificed ourself, we used to try to wash ourself. And finally, one time I remember we have been in the Baustelle

⁵ The evacuation from Jawischowitz actually began on January 19, 1945.

⁶ Subcamp of Buchenwald. Located in the Sachsen Province (Prussia). Evacuated April 9, 1945. Prisoners were sent in the direction of Ort Wittenberg.

[Ger: "site"], where we worked over there; and the SS, even, was dirty. And it was wintertime, in January. It was real, real cold. We asked the SS...we saw over there they had a well with pumping water. They had water over there. We asked SS if they would allow us to go to wash ourself, because we don't have no water inside the camp. And they said, "Yes." So we took off our clothes, and we washed ourself without clothing. They couldn't believe it, that we are able to do something like this. And they looked like real different people. Those all other people, they're black. Got baked in in their skin. And they used to treat them worse, real bad. Because they said, "You see? They can wash themself. You don't care anymore." They used to beat the other one, who was there a longer time. [They] used to be mad at us, because they said, "You just wait. You gonna be here a little while longer. You gonna get like we, too." Which was true. It didn't took too long, we got to the same point. We didn't care anymore. We couldn't walk practically on our feet, nothing, anymore. And we...the worse thing was, over there, every day used to be where they have the gate where we marched out to work and come in to work. They used to stack up the dead ones who died on the way. They used to stack them about...uh...six...four, six meter hoych...uh, high--the dead bodies; because they ready, you know, to take them away to crematorium. When we always...we went out to work, the SS told us to take along a little wagon, four-wheel wagon. And we didn't know it what for, but later I realized. Because those people who died on the way or on the working place, we had to take the dead bodies back to the camp. And we always been scared, we know it: if...if we gonna be forced to pull dead bodies, the next day we will not be anymore able to make it anymore. And we know it. And we used to try everything just to run away; not to be...not to pull this wagon. We succeeded. One time, I remember I went...I was assigned... I gave away my rations to a one from the camp to...who did assign you to go out to a Dachdecker [German: "roofer"]. To cover the roof--bombed, uh... Roofs that had been bombarded. We could cover it. So we had a chance. We come among civilians, German civilians; and once in awhile they give us, by themselves, something to eat. Or if we couldn't, we used always to go to cover the...the roof; and we could see always they had...uh...piled up like flour, or onions, or whatever. We used to steal a little bit to take it along to the camp. This helped us something. This went on until April; more or less like April. In April in '45, the same way, they said we getting evacuated from Tröglitz, we didn't know it where.⁷ But we know it that we are pretty close to liberation. We heard it already. The same way they took us to wagons, they put us on the wagons. They took us I don't know how far. We thought it may be 10, 20 miles away...30 miles, whatever. And when it got dark, they told us... No, we stayed there on wagons; but the next day when it got daybreak, it was around woods. And they said we could go out and spend time in the woods; but in the evening, before it got dark, we had to go back on the wagons. And food got to be very, very little. It was not anymore food. We could see even that the guards, the...it was already Wehrmacht--elderly guards, actually. They didn't had too much to eat anymore, not too much. We didn't expect anymore too much. It was not to do it. Once in awhile, they gave us some (pause) raw...uh... I...I don't know how you call it. In Poland...in Yiddish, we used to call it "kukuryze" (Or, Pol: kukurydza) [Trans: "maize, corn"] Was a food like,

⁷ Tröglitz was evacuated April 9, 1945.

more or less, for animals--or real poor people ate this. They usually give us...we had a hand...two handfuls, like this. We got a little bit water...uh...portion allowed; you know, to bring a bucket of water to each wagon in the evening. This was all. Otherwise, we used to open our mouths when it was raining. We were after Moses, how we had our water. One time we have been in the woods; and we could see the...those old guards. They didn't care too much anymore. So we had been 3 of us. We said, "Let's sneak away." Their barometer was fouled up. We always say we go we pick up some wood, want burn...warm up a little bit water. They let us do it. And we sneaked out. We sneaked out; we came... One time we had been already out, you know, in the area. I remember we stayed overnight in the woods far away a little bit. A couple of miles away from over there. And we tried to fall asleep, but it was so cold. It was a fast fall. We couldn't fall asleep. So we made out that every few minutes--5, 10 minutes--one should go in the center, where it's a little bit warmer. And we warm each other, and maybe we...to get a chance. You know, that we have a chance to warm up. And...uh...the morning we got up, we couldn't sleep. And finally we said we have to go to try, you know, to shnorr, or something--you know, to beg. We saw some houses. So we, more or less... those two who looked more or less half-decent--like civil[ians]--they couldn't recognize that we had been KZ prisoners. We made them that they could go and beg for some food; and if they have some food, they will come. They will give me, too; and bring it. And they went out for food. And for some reason, they got caught. Somebody on a motorcycle--an SS, whoever it was--caught them. They asked them if it's more people that he knows. And he says, "Yes, somebody is in the wood." So when they showed where...where I am, more or less. And I, meanwhile...the sun came up, and I fall asleep. When I woke up, I saw those two came back and two Volkssturm.⁸ They been Volkssturm--means they mobilize people. You know, they had not been able anymore to the army to go; but for things like this, to protect the country more or less... With two rifles. And they come over to me, and they say with rifles, "Get up." And I said--this must be that two, three days that we actually we didn't have nothing to eat and nothing to drink. But period, nothing. And when I fall asleep over there and he said with the rifle to get up, I tried to get up. I tried to stay on my legs. I fall back down. He say they gonna shot me. I said, "What's wrong with this?" To shoot you was like you give a kid...uh...a candy! But they didn't shot me. And I tried again and again. And so they didn't have no food whatever. So one talked to the other one, and talked it over; and they went into...uh...a private home somewhere--was not far away--and one came with two carrots, raw carrots. And he gave me the two carrots. I ate those two carrots; and I could walk. Stand on my feet, and walk like any normal person. I still don't believe myself, even, this. They took us back to the camp, to make it short. So they came the Lagerführer, a high SS man. He says, "Why did you run away?" All of us, we...we told him, "We didn't run away. We just wanted to beg for food and come back." And he...he does...does it like that (gesturing), and...he says, "You think I am not hungry?!" Something like this. And he says, "7 o'clock, you get shot." Again, do me a favor! All right.

⁸ Volkssturm (People's Militia) was organized in October 1944 and made up largely of boys and older men, men between the ages of 16 and 60 who had not otherwise been called up to serve in other units of the German Armed Forces.

But...uh...the guards, they know...they help...they got their rations 6 o'clock. And they didn't care anymore. So they run for their rations. They know it if they don't go for their rations, they will not have it. So they let us alone. They run for their rations; and we run to the wagons. And the other guys, we told them we are set up to be shot at 7 o'clock. And they think when we go on the wagons, they will not know who it was, or whatever. And the guy who was in charge--for each wagon, was a guard in charge--he said, "No." He got all the people. He doesn't need anymore. He count them, always, in the evening. But they sat on each other, to hide them. He said, "No, we need them." So they pulled us in the wagon. That's all. A day, two, later... One time, uh...we saw planes coming. When the planes are coming was the same way like...like the Messiah come. We had the nice face like normal people--smiling, bright smiling. And here the guards, the SS and those lot, they keep on looking; and they really, they bombed the wagons...the wagons. And there, they first they run away--those guards. And we had to run away; although we had been legal, actually. No, we could run away. We hanged around in the woods here and there. And then they come again. They start to gather us and bring us back. And, uh, they brought us back. I remember...I don't remember what town it was. A little German town. I know it was in the front a restaurant, in the back was a large backyard. They brought us over there. And it's meant like: somebody goes here, somebody here, somebody here, somebody here. And sure enough, we saw it. One side, actually--took us to the other side, not where I was--they shot them like nothing. Everybody just...you didn't hear even a scream, not a... Like nothing happened. You just saw them lying dead, all of them. They put us on wagons again. No, they marched us. Meant that we have to walk. But on the way, so long we have been marching. You...they allowed you to march. You didn't get no food, no nothing; but they...you could march. But if you couldn't march anymore, whatever...shot you. So both sides of the road been full with dead bodies. We didn't realize, but later we hear they keep on shooting. So we realized. The beginning, we didn't know why it was so many dead bodies. We realized what had happened. In Tröglitz was 4, 5 thousand people alive--maybe. But when we came back over there to our...again to the Sammelpunkt [**German:** "collecting place"], where they gathered us all together, maybe was 200. I don't know. It's hard to tell. It was not too many. All other have been in the...in the side of the ditches. And this, I believe, was Leitmeritz [**NB:** Litom__ice].⁹ Leitmeritz: the same way, no floor. You have a barrack, and they had everything terrible. Uh, but...uh... they didn't beat you, nothing. They...they said, "The morning, you're gonna get coffee." We didn't hear anymore about bread, even; but "You gonna get coffee." And we carried around always a rusted can, you know. And we couldn't practically sleep the whole night. We waited already to get something a little bit warm in our mouth. True enough, early in the morning, they said we get the coffee. Everybody runs, didn't took no chances to wait. Everybody wanted to be first. And we got over there. And I got the coffee, whatever; and I drank it down quick. Then they tell us, "All you...you gonna be taken to Theresienstadt [**NB:** Terezín]. This is a sanitorium. It's not anymore a concentration camp. You're gonna be treated like people. Oh, you don't know how lucky you all are!" You know. But...uh...after I drank, suddenly I got diarrhea. I got diarrhea, and I

⁹ Subcamp of Flossenbürg. Located in Czechoslovakia.

couldn't stay on my legs anymore. But I had two good friends, what I had been with them together in Auschwitz--[Yankin (ph)] and another. They say, "Mietek, [**Three or four Yiddish sentences follow, which are undecipherable**]." Theresienstadt...we saw it, more or less. We saw it like people; because we didn't look like people. This is the truth. We didn't look...when they looked at us, they got scared. They run. They run away. And here, if they pass by like with food supplies what they cared to give out for the people, those people attacked. I mean, I couldn't...I couldn't walk... They attacked, and they grabbed whatever they could. So we...we even looked like a wild, wild animals. I'm not talking about humans at all. When we came in, I was in very bad shape. And we was in the block, suddenly. And they start a little bit...they said, "You'll get a little bit food." We got a little bit food, here and there. They kept us waiting. They start to disinfect...disinfection us... You know, all kind woman came. They shaved us all the way, everywhere. And they gave us, more or less, clothes...new clothing. I mean, clean clothing. Because ours was terrible. Because we never changed. I was over there [**NB:** in Tröglitz] over 3 months. We never had a different shirt. Whatever we got in the beginning, this...this...we had it all the time on. And so they more or less disinfect us a little bit. And it's... But people kept on dying and dying and dying, if you eat something. But I didn't cared. I kept on...kept on eating and eating; and I kept on feeling better and better. And I felt, actually, that I start to get a little bit more to myself...to be myself. And for some reason, always they picked me...they picked me. They needed over there to keep an eye to give out the supply ...food supply, what it came from the Red Cross. From Switzerland, from Sweden. That I should help over there giving it out. Alright, I came over there. And over there was from the best breads, from the best butters, from the best...uh...sausages. You name it. Over there was...was it, over there. Only thing you...if you could eat it. And who could eat it, everybody really got real ...like normal; strong back. And for some reason, I had to go in the same way; count always the people in the blocks, where we supplied them with food. And I don't know what it happened. Suddenly, I lost mine appetite. I couldn't eat anymore. And they put me over there, like in a hospital. Was no doctors, no taking care. You just laid. You wait until you drop dead, because everyday whatever they put in over there is very seldom somebody walked out from it. And I was over there, didn't had no treatment. No, I didn't know what it was 'til today. But I know one thing. Whenever I could have the best food and eating, was my...my mouth was locked up--like with a lock.¹⁰ I used to take, along a park, Theresienstadt. They still had parks. And I said, "I go in fresh air, sit on a bench. Maybe I'll be able [to eat]." Nothing helped. I was over there maybe a week, laying around. And I still don't know--I had a chance to walk out to over there, and I could walk already. My appetite start to come little by little. I...I know I never fight for my life, actually. In fact, I was upset why I am alive. It was much more better people than me. (Long pause - crying). Yeah, then...then I was tried to go to Poland back. I thought for a few or maybe I found a brother or something. I had still brothers, two sisters. Somebody. And I was in Radomsko--this is about 20 miles from Przedborz--and I tried to go in. On the way, I recognized one who used to work in the factory for us. And I called his name. And I said, "[Piogotski (ph)]!" This was his name. So he came...he passed by with

¹⁰ This would seem to suggest Tetanus--also known as "Lockjaw."

horses with a carriage, with a wagon. And he said--the first thing what he asked me, "You still _ywy [Pol]?!". That means, "You are...are you alive?!" Like I shouldn't live over there. And then he told me about Przedborz, it was 12 people. They had been, more or less, like unterwald Jewish people, you know. You know people, who didn't bother... didn't care. They just...you know, they have been...were hidden among Poles, didn't say they're Jews. They survived. They used to live in a one Jewish home over there in Przedborz. And one night, the Poles came...the AK--Armia Krajowa. It's a Polish extreme radical organization. They killed all 12. They put up sacks on their heads, and with axes. So he told me, "It's not too safe for you to go back home." A woman saw I had the conversation and I start to cry. And I told...uh...to this [Piogotski (ph)], I told him in Polish...I told him, "You know that I didn't go to Auschwitz as a Jew." It was not... It was true. Because I was involved, I listened always, you know, to BBC. This was everything... When the SS men, they examined--the Gendarmerie, you know--this was all written in. And I told him, "I went to Auschwitz...uh, like...as a Pole! And now I cannot go back?" And I start to cry, and I practically spit on him. So the woman came out, and she said... And I told her what's happen; and she said, "Please, do me a favor. If you want go, go to a big city. Go to Warsaw. Go to _ód_--Litzmannstadt. But you cannot go to Przedborz." So in the morning ...and she took me in, in her house, and I slept the night; and the morning, I went back to the train. And I went back to Prague, to Czechoslovakia. When I came to Czechoslovakia, I met other friends who survived in Auschwitz; and they went home to...to Belgium. They told me, "Come. Come along." They know it I don't have nobody. They said, "Why don't you come along...come with us to Belgium?" I said, "Okay." So they told me...they gave me a few hints--cities. They says, "When the Consul ask you, you tell them, you know, this and this and this." And I come to the Consul, whatever. He asks me other questions [than] what they told me. So he said, "You are not from Belgium." So, no, I didn't pass. I couldn't go. So they told me, "Go to a sanitorium over there," where they have been. He says, "Over there, they treat you real, real good. And real nice." Then he gave me the address, and I went over there to the sanitorium. They told me, "Don't say you are from Poland." They say, "If you're from Poland..." They have...uh, skirmishes--the Polish army with the Czech army--at this time. Must have been in...in May '45. And so I said, "Okay." I came to the sanitorium. They asked me, "From where you are?" And I told them I am from Hannover, in Germany. And they took me in. And the Czech people, it's unbelievable how decent and good people. I never saw it, and I couldn't believe it, how they treat me. Finally, a doctor examined me; and he told me that mine heart is enlarged. This comes from hunger. He told me not to walk steps, this and this. And I ask him...I ask him, "Is this forever?" He said, "No. It's not to say. If you in normal conditions, maybe it goes back to normal." But this was the first time I was examined. I was over there for about 4 weeks. And I look... I couldn't recognize myself. Used...Mrs. Beneš one time came to see us. Young girls used to come. And we still have been our head shaved. We didn't look...we looked half-human. They used to say how beautiful we are. It's unbelievable how decent, good people they are. (Crying) Okay, this was actually in there, I used to go out already in Prague. And I always...I didn't care to be on the...the Russian side. And we used to hear always...used to come in the other occupation to the American side. And they used to say that, you know, that they're treated real nice. The Army take care, and so forth. And I...I just didn't like to see Russian soldiers, to be honest. So I went to an

organization where they send you home from wherever you are. So I went to this organization, said I want to... I told them I want to go back home; because Hannover, I think, was under the British, even. And they said, "Oh, to Hannover, they have only 1 month a transport. You would have to wait 2, 3 more weeks." Then was over there a German. And he says he drives his car to Stuttgart. He drives to Stuttgart; and he says, "It's on the way." He says, "At least you'll be closer." I didn't know it the difference between Stuttgart and Hannover. So I...he offered me. I says, "Okay." So he took me along; and I ended up in...in Aus...in Stuttgart. In Stuttgart, first...uh...they send me over there. It was a organization for KZ,¹¹ and Germans also. They send me...they gave me food and they send me to sleep in a school somewhere. It was...uh, it was at least...uh, uh...human, more or less. In the morning, I went out to the city a little bit, looked around. And right away, it was other ones. They...we recognize each other. And they...they said, "It's from...from KZ?" And I said, "Yes." He said...they asked me, "From where? From what?" I told them everything. He said, "Where you stay?" And I told them the [Akuptschule (ph)]. "Oh!" He told me, "Go take the street car!" They took...they helped me. They showed me where to go, what to go. They took me to Degerloch;¹² and [in] Degerloch was uh Katz Sanitorium. Degerloch is also outside Stuttgart. Outside Stuttgart; and it was over there a sanitorium. The... the US...uh, Army... Over there was for Germans, the sanatorium. So he chased...they chased them out; and they told all...I think, KZ...those all prisoners from KZ. And the German government had to supply us with the best food, with the best in everything. Everything the best. And over there was really...you know, got back to normal. And I looked more like a human. And everything got back to normal.

Q: You worked, I believe. After that, you worked for UNRRA.

A: When I wasn't in...in the sanitorium--Katz Sanitorium was the name. The one who was in charge of the food supply, he went to America. This was a event already in '45; must be in America. So they looked for somebody; and the same way, I didn't volunteer. I didn't go nowhere. I don't know why. And they came to me. And they told me...you know, they want me that I will be in charge for the supplies from the IRA¹³ and I should give out all provisions to those who live over there in the sanitorium. And I was never somebody that who knowed too much what...uh...to do business with other. I was too naïve, very simple. And I wanted always constantly working, actually. I went to work. So I went to work over there... uh...off in IRA. Mrs. Greenbaum, she worked for IRA. She was a United States citizen. She came over from here to helping IRA. And I got along with her real, real good.

¹¹ E.g., for former concentration camp inmates.

¹² A suburb of Stuttgart.

¹³ Actually, IRO: International Refugee Organization. The IRO took over the functions of UNRRA with respect to refugee matters on July 1, 1947.

Q: How did you meet your wife? We have very little time.

A: I went out...when they liquidated, actually, the camp--Degerloch. They gave back the sanitorium to Katz, actually; they gave him back everything. And they said, "Whoever want...you want live private, you go and live private. You want go to Reinsburgstrasse, ..." The Reinsburg Street is where was the other DP, the main DP camp. In Stuttgart, was on the Reinsburg Street. "...you can go live over there." Uh, so I choose...I was living private. And I was actually... First, I figured I have a brother in Israel. I was now in contact with him. And I figured I will go to Israel. Then I changed my mind. The reason was, because I know it that he is over there not so well off. He's just working. And if I come over there, he had already--I know it--he had already a boy, a kid, a wife. He gonna try to sacrifice himself to help me. And I said, "It's no good. If I stay away, I can do any work. I am not anymore... Nobody knows me. I am home, this or this. I can do every work." And I was willing to work. And I said, "I rather maybe go and I have a friend for me." The one who survived, Federman; and he kept on writing me letters constantly, "Come to America." He was already...he left in '45. "Come to America. Come to America. Don't be afraid." I told him, "I don't have no trade. I am not educated." He say, "You'll make a living. Don't worry about nothing else." So I said, "Okay." I...I didn't wanted to come...come America. Because I was scared, because I didn't have nothing. What to show, or what to able to do with it. But I...the last minute I decided I didn't want to stay in Germany, either. I said, "I will go to America." And meanwhile, my wife I met. I got acquainted in Stuttgart one time with her. I was waiting for a street car. (Chuckle) And uh we talked, and then I asked her if I can meet her again. Uh, I met her again and again, (chuckle) until I came over here in '49. In September, the end of September '49. She was over there. And I... She always used to write me real nice letters, and everything. And I really missed her. And I worked here--the first job--and my boss Mr. Wolf, for whom I worked for American Industries, he was very nice to me. He was very interested. He always called me in and talked to me privately. He had been very pleased with the job what I did for the factory over there. So he helped me. He told them about that, I have over there a girlfriend, so forth. So he used to write letters to the...to the US Consul, to help me about this and this. I went to school, in the school...the Americanization school, actually. So they helped a little bit, too. They wrote letters for me. Finally, she registered, and she came in '51 here. We got married here. And the Rabbi Schiff married us. I knowed...I knowed very well, also, Rabbi Gerstenfeld at the Hebrew...at the Hebrew Synagogue. And this is... So we... This is life.

Q: Thank you very much. That's it.

A: Thank you. It's sort of a long story, but I didn't know how to make it shorter, either.

Q: No. It was just fine. Yeah.

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

A: If I can be any help, I'd be more willing to help. I have now more time. I'm retired...