

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Abe Resnick
September 22, 1994
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PREFACE

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ABE RESNICK **September 22, 1994**

Beginning Tape One

Question: Okay, I need you to begin by stating your name, where you were born, when you were born.

Answer: Many years ago. I'll start?

Q: Yes.

A: Okay, my name is – my real name when I was born is **Abraham Resnickowitz**(ph). Actually – people know him by – know me by **Abe Resnick**, actually. But that was my given name at the time, ninetee – I was born 1924, February 27th. I was born in a small city – small town in the eastern part – northeastern part of **Lithuania** by the name of **Rokiškis**. It was a relatively small town. It was actually a county more than a town, in the sense that there were some surrounding towns – small towns which, most of the time, our town was famous in having a large – not conventions, but I would say markets. People used to come from all over because you see, **Lithuania** is agr – was a an agricultural **[indecipherable]** coun-country and in the larger towns we used to have twice a week markets, whereby people used to bring their agricultural products to that – to the – to the city and – and they were sold at the – at the markets. I was born in a family that my father, who was – who came from a different town, he was also in

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the – he fought in the Independence War of **Lithuania**. And due to the fact that he was fighting for Lithuanian suverani – sovereignty, he was given two choices; one, a farm or a governmental job. He decided what's a Jewish boy going to do on a farm? So he – he decided to take a governmental job. And the job was, basically he was a inspector – insurance inspector. Insurance was, in **Lithuania**, a – belonged to the government and regulated by the government. So he came to this small town. First of all, he came to the town, in the beginning, as a – as a bookkeeper, and he worked for a company. And then, of course, he met my mother who was a native, and a fourth or fifth or six generation of people who lived in **Rokiškis**. That means my great-grandfather and my great-great-grandfather, they were established there for – for many years. And after my father married [**indecipherable**] he opened up his own business and the office was normally – office was in – in the house. I have a very nice house and the address of the house – of course, that's irrelev – irrelevant. Then when –

Q: But you had a very comfortable life.

A: I had – I had – I had a very comfortable life in the sense that we had a large family and we had many, many friends. We had a – a – even a Jewish bank in this – in this town. There were out of the 6,000 people that lived in the town, I think 50 percent were – were Jewish. And it was – had quite a few synagogues. It was a –

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and the town was always known – known as a **Chabad** town, **Chabad**, which was now being known was as the **Lubavitch**. Incidentally, in 1933 the rabbi – the head rabbi from the **Lubavitch** movement came down to our town and it was a big – a big event. I remember he came to the train station and he was carried through because he had a – he was handicapped. And incidentally, my parents took me to him for a blessing and sometimes I say this blessing maybe was the one that saved me from all these difficulties that I went through my life. Now, I had a younger sister, and – two younger sisters. One was four years younger, the other one was eight years younger than myself. And the cultural life was very – it was a small city but it was a very – very unique in the sense of the friendship and the – had many a large, large family, plus the fact we were also close to the border of **Latvia**. And I had a – a aunt who married into **Dvinsk**, which was about 50, 60 miles, but it was already in **Latvia**. So we had also relatives that used to come in between **Latvia** and **Lithuania**. When I grew up, I went to a – to public school. My parents had said – decided to send me to **Kovno**, which was the – which was the capital at that time of **Lithuania**.

Q: Before we get to **Kovno**, I just – your – I – as I understand it, your family was quite religious?

A: Yes, they were not that fanatics but they were – they were – the – the whole –

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you see, the whole city, the – those small cities were very much religious. People were – there were exceptions who were not religious, most – 99 percent were religious, and everybody used to belong to the synagogue, and there were no reformed or – or – or conservative. There was one type of synagogue. They were Orthodox synagogues at that time.

Q: Did the Jewish population mix much with the –

A: Very – very much in the sense that they were mostly storekeepers and we had attorneys, and we had dentists, and we had a – like I mentioned, we had a bank. And the head of the bank was also, of course, a Jewish bank which – and the bank basically, mostly was also in a sense to help need – people in need and they used to also participate in – in –in charity and in helping people to establish themselves in new businesses.

Q: Jewish and non-Jewish?

A: Jewish and non-Jewish, right, yeah.

Q: Okay. What about political or Zionist organizations?

A: There were – everybody was there a Zionist, and many people, incidentally have – at that time, it didn't exist yet, the State of Israel, but we had in – in quite a number of occasions, when Zionist leaders used to come down to our city to – to explain the necessity of having a – having our own country and promote the Zionist

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ideas.

Q: Okay. So you were beginning to tell me about moving to –

A: Yes, I – I moved – actually, I – I – I didn't move. My family still stayed on in **Rokiškis** and – but I was sent to **Kovno** and that time, at the age of 12 or 13, I was sent to my grandparents who used to live in **Kovno**. And my parents felt very comfortable, the fact that I'm going to be living together with my grandparents and my uncle. So they used to live on – almost on the main street, was – which was call **Laisvės alėja**. That means, in translating, the **Alley of Independence**. And I was right there on the corner of **Kanto gatvė** and **Laisvės alėja**, and there used to live – my – my grandparents used to live and we were very comfortable. And the fact that the school they put me in was also a gymnasium, which was about five minutes walking distance from – from where they used to live. And of course, I started going to the – to the school. The – the – the schooling system was extremely well and this – this was the reason also they send me to **Kovno**, because in the small cities they didn't have Hebrew gymnasiums and this was a Hebrew gymnasium. And incidentally, this gymnasium was on the name of **Chase** because a benefactor by the name of **Chase** was the one that established – from **United States**, was the one that established this gymnasium in – in the – in **Kovno**, the capital of **Lithuania**. So I went through the – the friend that had many friends. And we – we

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didn't have too much time, leisure time, because the system – the educational system was extremely, extremely serious, and very disciplined. We used to have uniforms with a hat and – and a special outfit. And we basically started early in the morning, and I used to come back home late and I had to make my homework, and was very, very little time to – to – for leisure. Of course, sometimes going to the movies, sometimes – incidentally, I also lived next store, right around the corner to the opera, which I was very – you had a – **Lithuania** was a small country, but it had a very cultural – the cultural life was there, very intense. And by having the opera around us and especially myself and also many of our friends were very much involved in the opera. Of course, we didn't have the money and the resources to – to – to go and sometimes to the opera, but we always find a way to participate and to enjoy the cultural life and especially the opera, the ballet. And it was a beautiful, beautiful opera. And this was also was in a compound of a – within a park, a city park. I also remember that I used to read quite a lot. And there was, of course, radio, all what we had. And it was in the early stages. We didn't have, of course, TV or some other entertainment. So mostly our activities were basically around the community, around the synagogue, which was not too far also from us. **Kovno** was a city of about I would say hundred and – hun – hundred – over 100,000 people – out of about I would say maybe 150,000 people. Out of them, maybe one –

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one-fourth, one-third was – were – were Jewish people.

Q: You were in the main part of – of **Kovno**?

A: The main – yes, in the main part, in the – in the center – in the center, right. And remember that on Saturday, of course, the – the school – were no school and we used to walk. We had this – **Laisvės alėja**, the street was composed of a median with benches and – and a place to – to walk and – and to enjoy. The climate – the climate was also very good in a certain way because of course we had a – we were almost the same parallel as **Montreal**, but their climate was a little bit milder, in the sense we had very harsh winters and very beautiful summers. And we really enjoyed the – the surroundings. In winter, we used to go skating and – and had some – and with sleds, you know, had s – very war – it used to be also beautiful in the sense that we used to go out and – and had the wintertime, you know, with horses and sleds and it was a remarkable – it was a very interesting and – and very joyful life, yeah.

Q: What did the city look like?

A: The city was a extremely, extremely clean city. And the buildings, we didn't have any high-rise buildings there. I think the tallest building was about four – four-stories high. Most of them were two stories. Somewhere in the center of the city, of course, there were commercial buildings and also apartment buildings. We

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had also a number of movie theaters, and then we had a remnant from when – when **Lithuania** was occupied by **Russia**, we had a place which was called the **sabor(ph)**. The **sabor(ph)**, that was a – a – like a church that was not functioning as a church, but it was like a – like a remnant from the – from the tsarist times and – and it was used, like, mostly as a museum. We had also few museums. It was also a military museum, which was called a **karo muziejus**. We had – also the topography was very beautiful because we had like, small mountains surrounding, and we had two rivers, the **Neris** and the **Nemunas**. And of course, wintertime was very joyful, there were – when they were frozen we used to enjoy the skating and going around, and –

Q: What about Jewish life?

A: Jewish life was very, very – for instance, I –

Q: I'm sorry. I need you to start again because I was talking.

A: Yeah. I belonged to different – not different – there were not too many organizations – Jewish organizations, mostly Zi-Zionist. And also at the same time, I belonged to the international organization, which was the **badin-badin(ph)**, which were the boy scouts, which we enjoyed. We used to have outings and the outings were basically – we used to go out to the forest and then stay there over – stay over. And also we were taught different – different measures in ou-our rel-

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relationship there, I mean, the – the – the essence of wha-what does it mean there, to be a boy scout in **badin-badin**(ph). We also – I remember we were taught also – we used to wave with flags the **Morse** code, you know, with – by communicating which is a – which ea – with each other by – was the little flags like between two ships, you know. Also, I remember we were also being educated and explained about the – about **Palestine** and about the activities that were at that time in **Palestine**, about the – the influx of the amount of Jewish people to **Palestine**. Also, about the **Ottoman** times in **Turkey**, which were also in some – or some years ago that Turkey, what – they had a very big influence on **Palestine** when they had – they were under Turkish occupation, by the Ottomans and [**indecipherable**]. We were very extremely well versed. And life went by and I used to go back to my – in the summertime, I used to go back to join my – my family to **Rokiškis**. I remember I used to take the train. It would take forever, and it was only about 200 miles. I don't remember, kilometers or miles, but [**indecipherable**]. And then I used to join my family and I was very proud. People used to respect me very much for the fact that I am – I am – I am coming from my big city, or – my other friends were educated in our small city, most of them went to Lithuanian schools. And the relationship between Jews and Lithuanians was very, very cordial, you know, very nice, they were very friendly, and we had never had any – any big sense of

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anti-Semitism. I mean, at least we didn't – didn't feel that. Sometimes, in sporadic cases, in – there were certain – certain acts of hostility, but very, very rare. And going back and forth, and so we reached the time when I was – reached eight. The last year was the eight class, you know, and this – this was the year when we – I was going to finish the gymnasium and, of course, after gymnasium, as – as you know, that a gymnasium is like a – translated in terms of here, American terms, it's like a partially college – high school and college, whereby we had to take also **logaritmais** and differentials and ma-many items that were many – such – many subjects that were being taken in the – in the – in – in wi – in the university.

[**indecipherable**] My – I was – I took Latin because we had – we were able to take some foreign languages. I – I – I took – Russian, I spoke because when I was born my parents finished Russian schools before Lithuania was independent. So I – I spoke, when I – in the beginning I spoke Russian. And when I went to – to school, and to cheder, I start speaking Yiddish, and then, of course, Hebrew and then, of course, Lithuanian. And then I took German in – in school, I had to take. And then I took Latin because I – my – my interest was to become a doctor and my parents wanted to send me to Italy because the curriculum in – in **Lithuania** was very small. We had a university, not – not too big, and that was very difficult to get into the university. So some friends of ours went to **Italy** and my aim was also to go to

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Italy after finishing gymnasium. And of course, 1939, this was still before – two years before I finished gymnasium, the – the Russians – I mean, the turmoil in Europe started. The Russians have decided with the **Ribbentrop** pact, you know, to divide between **Germany** and **Russia**. **Russia** was going to take over the **Baltics**; **Lithuania**, **Latvia**, and **Estonia**. And **Germany** was take part of **Poland**, and – and of course, **Czechoslovakia** and **Austria**, so forth and so on. So it started already, the feeling we – we felt that there is something – something happening, but we have never – we were confident that our government is – which was a democratic country with a president, a parliament, and with quite a lot of liberty and freedom. But in 1939, we have – we found out one day that we are under the Russian – the Russian – that the Russians have absorbed the three **Baltic** states and we – we have heard – I mean, the – that like a day or two days ahead of time that the Russian tanks are going to be coming into **Kovno**, to **Lithuania**. Of course, there was no resistance because compared to **Russia**, we had a small miniature army and there was no way that we were able to fight **Russia** at that time. And – and the Russians took – I remember when they – when they marched into **Lithuania**. And right away when they marched in – you see, our gymnasium was a Hebrew gymnasium. So when the Russians came in, they changed their – right away they eliminate –

Q: I'm sorry. There's airplane noises.

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A: We didn't give them permission. [break]

Q: How – how did, in **Slobodka** especially, that was a very important center of Jewish life, and I would like to –

A: The Yeshivot. The biggest Yeshiva, yeah, right, yeah.

Q: – get a little more detail of –

A: Yeah, but can I continue? And then tha – that was – make it brief and then –

Q: Sure.

A: Right, so the Russians came and when they came in, they changed the whole system. First of all, suddenly from a democracy, we became a part of the Soviet Union, a republic. And right away they started changing the currency. They brought in many military personnel. They start taking over and nationalize the businesses. They – in my – in **Rokiškis**, my parents were told that the – the house is too big, too luxury for – for – for a family, that we have to take in some families. And they put in some families in – in – in – in the house. They – our business what – we had a factory of roofing paper, which was not too big so they didn't – they didn't do anything about that. But in **Kaunas** – in **Kovno**, they started nationalizing the big businesses and they start taking out those people who they felt they are not sympathetic with the – with the – with the Russian government and that they had some – some kind of history that they were exploiting people. They start taking

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them out – taking them to **Russia**. I remember that, being still in school, I was given the assignment to nationalize a large – a large wholesale food business, which all kinds of items there, and we had to take the inventory. And then, of course, the – the owners were placed temporarily to be the managers and then they were kicked out basically, from those businesses. So, in – in – in **Rokiškis**, they also start taking out those people who they considered that they are bourgeois. And fortunately my – my parents had very good contacts within the Lithuanian community. Father speak perfect Lithuanian, and as I mentioned, he was in the army, so they didn't touch him. But some of our relatives, they took them out and they send them to **Russia**, and those people had very difficult time but they have – they – they were fortunate in a certain way. And I'm going later to relate to you, that they were fortunate being – when they were taken to Russia, rather than stay on. So going back to **Kaunas**, we had – **Kaunas** was a, as I mentioned, not a very large city but we had some suburbs. One of them was **Slobodka**, which was called **Vilijampolė** in Lithuanian. And this was a center of Jewish learning. There were –

Q: Stand by please. [break]

A: People used to come – students used to come from all over – all over the world to be educated in those yeshivots, which were in **Slobodka**, which is – **Slobodka** yeshiva was like a something – a special place of – of learning, which many, many

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big scholars have come out from – from there – from this yeshiva. We had another yeshiva [**indecipherable**] **Ponevezh**, but **Slobodka** was the – like the – the crown of the – of the – of the learning institutions. And most of the people, it was a – most of **Slobodka** was comprised of a Jewish population, middle lower class. But people were comfortable. There was not – nobody was hungry, especially, as I mentioned that **Lithuania** was an agricultural country. So there was never a shortage of meat and – and bread and – and some other products like butter and milk, and that. So **Slobodka** was very much considered as a – a very, very unique and very special place, not only in **Lithuania**, like I mentioned, but throughout the – throughout the western hemisphere.

Q: Did you spend time in **Slobodka** as well?

A: I spend very little time because I was more to – our gymnasium was not a – not an extreme religious organization. We spoke Hebrew, we observed the holidays, but we were not fanatics like I mentioned. We –

Q: I have to ask you to try not to say "as I mentioned," because if this gets edited, we won't know what the other part is.

A: I understand.

Q: Thank you.

A: Okay, all right, okay. So we start living under the – under the regime of – su-

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suddenly became from my free country, suddenly became communist. A communistic system, socialistic system, they call that. And it was, in the beginning, we felt – we didn't feel too good about it but then we got used to it. Because especially at the age of 16 – 15, 16, 17, truthfully, we have not – we were still not – had the burden of carrying on a family and make a living and we – we were just sitting there and watching the changes which happened very, very fast. We saw also many fortifications have become – have been taken over by the – of course, the Russians have displayed their force. We had a airport which was about – about seven or eight miles from – from our city. And of course, we didn't have a military – military planes. I think we had one or two of them. That was considered a sizable amount for – for the – for the military in **Lithuania**. So time rolled and we have heard – Incidentally, at that time, also in the – after '39, we had something very special happen to us and this is –

Q: I'm going to have to stop you because we're out of tape and I don't want to interrupt that story.

End of Tape One

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Beginning Tape Two

Q: You were telling me about, in **Russia** –

A: Yeah, the – the life, the Jewish life in **Kovno**, and in general **Lithuania**, changed very drastically, and very dramatically, because we were used to belong la – to belong to our organizations, Zionistic organizations. These became taboo. That is a very offensive in the Russian – in the Soviet system, to belong to organizations which are not within their framework. They – right away, they expelled all the teachers, all the Hebrew teachers, and suddenly we became, rather than a Hebrew school, we became a Yiddish school. Yiddish for them was like the – main language, truthfully, was Yiddish, but Hebrew for them, was – they had certain suspicions that Hebrew is a little bit too closer to the – they considered those who spoke Hebrew like fascists, in a certain way. So, it was not easy to get transformed – to change sud-suddenly, and – and – and especially for us kids, you know, it was – although everybody spoke Yiddish, but the – the – the reason why I was sent to this gymnasium was not – because home we spoke Yiddish, was to learn, and to – to get acquainted with – with Hebrew, and not with Yiddish. But we had to obey and do whatever the government has instructed us to do. Now –

Q: Were any synagogues closed, or anything like that?

A: They were not closed. They were not closed. They still kept them open, but they

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were under very tight **scrutinity**(ph). And they watched very much who is going to the synagogue, and who is – and whether there is some counter-revolutionary – some kind of feeling or sentiments towards something which is not in the – in the scope of the – of the – of the Soviet theory. Now, in meantime, time was going on and the happenings in **Europe** were very traumatic, and – and very drastic.

Czechoslovakia fell. We suddenly had an influx of checs – Czechoslovakian – Czechoslovakian refugees. Some of them – many of them Jewish, who came – and they came actually to **Rokiškis**, not to **Kaunas**. They were afraid to go to the large cities, cause they were afraid to be interned, and then sent back to – to

Czechoslovakia. And they start telling us about – first of all, it was very hard for us to – to bring them in, because they – they were – they came in illegally. But we provided them – first of all, we took them to a synagogue, and we made them comfortable there, and there, little by little, we spread them out to different family houses. And they start telling us about the horrors, about what **Hitler** is doing to the Jewish population, and especially in **Czechoslovakia**. And most of those people who came, were very intelligent people, like one of them was a – I remember very vividly, one was a painter, and his paintings was fantastic. I remember even that he helped me to paint some – I had to make the – to make a thesis about certain – certain things in – in school, and he helped me to, with a – with a – with the

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paintings, whereby he – he was actually a perfect painter, you know, that. The other one, I remember the name, one was **Foyer(ph) Opataker(ph)**, the other one was a businessman who lost his business, and he a – was able to escape, just by himself. He was not able even to bring his family. They – then we had also influx from – from Polish refugees, who came – especially Polish military people, who interned themselves. But this – they – they came in actually legally – not I – they – I mean they – they crossed the border, and then they surrendered. So, of course their arms were taken away, and – and they were placed in a – in – I remember in a – in the center of the city, that was in **Rokiškis**. And I remember seeing them with their – where they took – care more on – they were more concerned about their boots and their uniforms than about some other – other things, you know.

Q: Excuse me, I thi – you're hearing that moving around in the kitchen? [**break**]

A: So this – this affected us, as youngsters, affected us very much, and – and we started listening to their stories, and – and then the horror stories that were – about the killings, about the rapes, about the robberies, about the – and – and we just – I remember I just was sitting, like I'm sitting now in the armchair, and listening to what they had to say. But of course, after I listen to their stories, I went – I had my food, and I had my – my room, and my bed, and the next day I got involved again in my daily duties. So, it affected us, but what we have not – we – we s – we should –

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looking in retrospect, we should have been a little bit more concerned, and more careful, and – which, we didn't do that, and –

Q: You didn't think this was going –

A: We didn't – we didn't think that this was going to expand. We felt that we are now very well protected under the Soviet regime, which Soviet **Russia** was considered – I – a stronghold, you know, and the – in – in **Europe**, and we felt that we're – we're in the safe side. In the meantime, in – in our house was also we were – we were compelled to take in some bor – some tenants, and one of them was a – a – was a Russian pilot. There was one pilot, and then they joined the other one. And we had to give up one of the rooms, and they – and they were there together with us. And I finished the gymnasium, we got ready to go back home, but for some reason, the certificates of completion were not made available. So I felt rather than to go back home, and I – I was very proud that I finish without any – any problems – I was not one of the best teacher – students, but I – I did my homework, and I – I never failed from one year to the other one. So I was waiting for to get a certificate in order to be able to come home, and to bring the sa – say I-I finished, and graduated, and I'm ready to go to university. So this was in the middle of June. And they told me that the certificates are going to be finished by June – by the later part of June, and I felt I'm going to stay for a few more days. You know, school has

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finished. The summer was there, and it was nice, and we got a little bit more used to the – to the – to our new system, and came June 21st, nighttime, and suddenly we had a – we heard a – some movement in the – in the room, from the two pilots that we had. And they suddenly, middle of the night, they run out, without saying anything. They disappeared. And a little while later we heard bombings, we heard planes. And we put on the radio, and this was the invasion of the second – actually the – the Nazi part of the second World War started. Whereby that **Hitler** didn't announce, without announcing, he just – he starts – start the invasion. And he actually deceived anybody, because there were no massed troops on the borders that time. He just tried to get this war started, and – and – and started war by surprise. And it was really a surprise, because no – nobody – nobody was – was ready for that. Everybody was living with the dreams that they had this **Ribbentrop** pact, it was **Molotov**, and – and that both parts were satisfied that there is no – we – we leaned more to the fact that we thought that he is going to – if he is going to attack, he is going to go against **England**, rather than – than – it was a – a incredible surprise. So, right away it – I remember my house, we – we – we didn't know what to do. We had also a other tenant, which I didn't mention before, that was – yeah?

What – what –

Q: [indecipherable] which I didn't mention –

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A: Okay, fine, eliminate it. We had a other tenant that was in the – in the – worked in the transportation. And he told us right away that there is a truck going to be available if we want – we want to go, but we were so confused, and everybody – we saw masses of soldiers, Russian soldiers running from one place to the other one. They bombed – basically, when they started bombing, they bombed the airport, and then certain military objectives. And the – the whole city became a – a – a turmoil. And we also heard about, through the radio, they start announcing that **Germany** has attacked the **Soviet Union**, and wir – that – the Lithuanians are – this was still with the Russians there, that the Lithuanians are very much in – in – in – in – in favor of – of reading and – and receiving the – the victorious – the victorious German troops. When I – I wanted to reach my house, because I – I felt to – to unite myself with the family. And I start running on the – in the highway, with my bicycle. I got my bicycle, and – and when I came to a certain point, I saw people coming towards us and said, return, because there is atrocities on the highway. They – they fly low, the German airplanes, and they – and they just kill everybody that is on there, on the highways. From time to time you have to run off and – and throw yourself on – on the ground, because the – the massacres are just incredible, especially in – because, you see the civilians, and the – and the – the Russians were also – they were mixed. They were running together. Many Russian trucks, they –

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right away they – they – they start abandoning their military supplies, and military barracks, and – and they – they just try to move eastward, you know, towards – towards **Russia**. And this was so dramatic, and we – we – we didn't know. We had some relatives on the – we had a – that was called a – the **klininbar**(ph), that's the – the green – the Green Mountain. That was a – a place within – within **Kovno** where we had some relatives who – who – from my aunt's part, who lived there. We felt maybe to go to them, there in that place maybe would be safer. So we went up there, and then we came back to our – to our apartment, feel the safest place is to stay in the apartment. Killings started, and especially Lithuanians, where they were very bo – very much against – against the Soviets. They hated the Soviets, you know, from the beginning. So – and they considered that there are some Jewish people were in the communists, and – and they – right away they wanted to take vengeance, you know, and what they did is, they right away start killing people, start torturing them, start – there was a s – a special – a special torture chamber, which was made to a – to a torture chamber, which was made in a – one of their gas stations. They brought in about 20 people, and they put hoses in their mouth, and they – and they start water pressuring. And they just killed them with the – with that. I mean, there were so – such atrocity that beyond – beyond description. And the Germans were not in yet. The ger – Germans were still – they – they – you see,

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the Germans, they had their tactics of the surrounding in a ring, and then closing up in the ring, an-and – and coming to the – to the – to the focal point where they were going to occupy. The – for the Russians it was a incredible shock what happened, and they – they were really not prepared and not ready for the oncoming victorious German troops. There were also announcements in the radio two days later, where it said that – it was in Lithuanian, in Russian, and in German, what said that – but basically highlighting in Lithuanian. The victorious German troops are coming, are close to **Kovno**, they are going to enter **Kovno** in – in the next hours, and we have noticed that some snipers, and some communists, and some Jews have – are resisting, and shooting against them. So we want to mention that for each German soldier that is going to be killed – that's going to be killed – hundred Jews or communists are going to be taken and shot, without – without any – any question. And this was constantly, and – and constantly in the radio. So we – we felt already, we knew what – what – what's coming and – and we didn't realize that we felt, maybe after **Kovno** is going to be taken over by the Germans, maybe they are going to establish their – their rules, and they are going to be more human than – than the Lithuanians, but this was not the case, and they occupied **Kovno**. Then suddenly, every day they used to make – promulgate a – a new decree. One decree, the first one was that all Jews have to bring into the **kommandantur** any arms, if they had

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any – any – any radios. Any watches. Anything, right away. Then there came a second decree, that the Jews cannot walk on the sidewalk, they have to walk on the – on the – on the street side. Third decree was that you have to give up all your – all – all the valuables. If you have some jewelry, some – some – any kind, any type of jewelry, stamps – I had a big collection of stamps, myself. I had to take my stamps and take it over to the – to the **kommandantur**. And that was considered –

Q: How would they know that you had it?

A: You know, the – the – the remedy, and they – they – what – what they stressed is, if by any chance we spot check, and we found that after this – they give you like 24 hours, or 48 hours to return all the – all the valuables. If they spot check, and they find somebody that has something what they – what the decree was about, they would take him out and shoot him right away. So no – nobody had – I think most of the people didn't want to – well, want to risk – of course, we risked, and – and it was a – it was like taking your – your life in your hands. But in the beginning, you – you didn't know what – what it – what it – to do, or not to do, because we – now, the last decree was that all Jews have – that was already a month later, in August, that all Jews have to come, and they're making a ghetto, surrounded by barbed wire, and this ghetto, all the Jews have to transport themselves, for their own means, get us a horse and buggy, and – and travel to the

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ghetto, which is in **Vilijampolė**, in **Slobodka**. This is where they decided, because they were originally a Jewish population, and those Lithuanians who were living there, have to give up their houses, and they were going to be resettled in some other houses, which were left by – by – by the Jews. I mean, that was like quid pro quo – pro quo, you know, they exchange. So right away we started looking for a – for a place, and there was also on first come, first move in basis. But of course, there were certain – they give you certain parameters, whereby that if you take – if you can't work out with a Lithuanian some kind of deal, whereby you can give him your house, and give him some nice furniture, and on top of that give him something extra, what – and we were fortunate to find a – a house in **Linkuvos gatvė**, I think it was, number 45, if I'm not mistaken. And we found a house, but the house was – it was a house, but in the house you had to – you – you were able just only – only about four or five people to occupy only one room. And the rest of the rooms were distributed to some – some other people.

Q: Who was in your – who was staying with you?

A: With us was staying a – my uncle, my aunt –

Q: I'm sorry. I want you to start that sentence, I was living with my –

A: I was – the house that we were moved in, in **Slobodka** in the ghetto was my uncle; my aunt; my cousin, who was two years old at that time – or one and a half

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year; my grandmother. That was in – in one – in one room. Then in the other rooms was a – a relative, a brother of my aunt, with his wife, with a little baby. In the other rooms were two ladies, a older lady, a younger name – by the name of **Londonski**(ph), and their daughter. So we were like three families, in a very little tiny-**miney** house, you know. We had a small yard, we had – the facilities were not in the house, they were outside. I had some water, and we had some certain things that we brought along with us, except for valuables. And this, when we're – when they closed the ghetto – that was in the beginning – the right way, when they closed the ghetto, they wanted to show their – their – that they – they mean business, so what they took is one – one guy that apparently they claimed that he hadn't complied with the – with the rules, they took him out and they publicly hanged him. And he was hanging for about a week. So everybody in the center of the – of the ghetto in – everybody that came by should have si – looked at – his name was **Mac**(ph), and I think – I – I'm sure that – I'm not I'm sure, but I know that **Kalish**(ph) has a picture from that, which she took with this candid camera.

Q: So you walked by this?

A: We had to walk by – by this man hanging for about a week. Week's a long time now. When we came into the ghetto, right away they establish – they start again with all kind of tricks, playing with us. The first – the first decree was that they

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need 500 educated intel – intelligentsia – intelligent people, who finished the gymnasium, and they need them for a very special task. They need them right away, and you have to – you have to come in by certain hour, in a certain place in the center of the ghetto. So, everybody was –

Q: [indecipherable] noise. I do want to hear the story, but airplanes. Do you want – [break] I'm hearing a lot of noise, you're not hearing – it's not bad? Okay.

A: So, they came out with a new decree, and this was to get five – they needed 500 –

Q: Can you start that and say, the Germans came up with –

A: The Germans – the Germans, soon they closed the ghetto – [bells] [break] – should have thought of that, it's right after this – after the decree. The Germans have promulgated a decree, whereby that they need 500 immediately, for a very special task, 500 educated intelligentsia people who were – had certain level of education. In order to be able to comply with this – with this special requirement. And everybody was some kind, you know, just came into the ghetto, and – and we were short on food, and then they also promised that they are going to be rewarded, very much re – very properly rewarded with – with food that – nobody – nobody spoke about money. Money was irrelevant at that time. The – the basic thing was food, food and food, you know. So everybody was rushing. My uncle – my aunt's

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brother told me that he would like to – he would like to go, and he had just to – he was in process of shaving or something, that I should wait for him few minutes. I was not too familiar with the ghetto yet, because it was split up in such a way, and I was never that – in that section of the city, maybe once or twice in my lifetime, because I had also a – a football place, where my **Maccabi**(ph) used to play there, in **Slobodka**, and my uncle – one of my uncles was a very, very good football player, so I – sometimes, you know, I was – but this was a new situation. So, I didn't know, and we were a little bit nervous, in the sense we wanted to be there on time. We didn't have – we didn't have watches, you know, we had to look at the sun, and to approximately make sure that we're in the right time. We – we start going, looking for a – for a place where they – where we were supposed to get, and we got there like 10 minutes late. There were already 506 people, were already up this – fulfill this assignment, this projected amount of people, and the – the Germans were satisfied, and you know, Germans are very meticulous and punctual. And they said, we have already the amount, and you go back, we don't need you any more. So we were a little disappointed, you know, we came back. In meantime, what happened within the – in the time that the Jews start moving to the ghetto, they were marry – many atrocities committed by Lithuanians. I mean, they were – they were – they were – just became so barbaric, and without any – any – any reason,

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you know. They – they start killing, raping, an-and taking away all kind of – all kind of items that belonged to – to the Jewish people, you know, when they – when – every time we moved, when we moved to the – to the Green Mountain, we were going to my aunt's brother's house. He had there a little farm, and we felt we're going to go over there, and we're going to be able to have some food, because he had – the farm still belonged to him. So, when we went there, there were – nighttime came in, and a group of like three or four people with their guns, and they started taking away everything, whatever we – and – and my uncle stood up for them, so they hit him with their – with their – with their rifle butt, you know.

Q: Sorry to keep breaking up the story, but – **[break]**

A: So we felt very, very defenseless, because there were no – nobody to protect anybody. I mean, it was a completely chaos and everyone did – whoever had a gun – I mean, he was the one that – similar to what's happened now in **Haiti**. Whoever had a gun, he was – he was able to do what – what – what he wished, you know. There were no – no – absolutely – the Germans have not taken over yet. They – they were in, but they mind their own business, and they let Lithuanians to enjoy themselves, doing what they did. And it was – was terrible things they have done. They have taken people to their – to their – to – to a prison. And there was also a teacher of my – I remember **[indecipherable] Goldman(ph)**, a familiar name. He

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was our English teacher. He was himself from **South Africa**. And he was a compulsive smoker, so they wouldn't give him any – anything to smoke, so he used to get the small ration of – of bread, he used to exchange that for – for cigarettes. And he finally succumbed, he died, you know, because he – he just – his body wouldn't – wouldn't resist it. But beside the beatings, and the – and the – and the – the – the terror that they – they have implanted in him was – it was just terrible. It was a case which – I have to describe that – a – a – a Russian tank failed to – when they were – by escaping, they – they just – he was right next to the – next to the river, the **Nemunas**. For some reason, I mean, he emerged in – in water, and got stuck there. They caught about 20 people, they put them like – like – like horses, you know, to pull out a tank – how can 20 people pull out a tank, which is who knows how many tons is the weight of the tank, and they just hit – hit the people, hit the people, till most of them were blooded, and – and – and were – were fainted, you know, in the – that – that was the – that was the situation. So one – in a certain way, when we came into the ghetto, we felt a little bit safer in our surrounding. We knew that – that there are going to be – we – we predicted, we anticipated some atrocities, but – but at least they were going to be in a – in a – in a – in a certain – in a certain – done in a certain way. We with – with some kind of order, no-not with – not – not just as sporadic, you know. So –

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Q: What about – what about the – some of the massacres outside of the city, in the very beginning?

A: No, those people who were running, and who came, who try to come back, I mean there's – most of them were – were just killed in the – on the highways, and they – they would just come into a house, they would – people who still didn't come together. Because the process to come into the ghetto was like a 30 day process. So they used to assault them, and then take away all their – whatever their – their – whatever they had, their packages, their suitcases, their valises, and – and they used to, in many cases people would kill them, in order just not to take them, because they used to take them out and – and shoot them in the outside, so –

Q: But weren't there some –

A: There were also –

Q: – systematic –

A: There were systematic. There were also a – they were called the **šauliai**. That was a Lithuanian organization which are like – they were called like – they're – they're – they were made – their make-up was from the – from – they were not – not army people, but it was like organization who used the uniform of sha – **šauliai** was like the – like the – they were called like the riflemen. And then these people would exert incredible, incredible hatred, and – and hate, an-and they would come

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out and – and do all kind of atrocities, you know. And they – they were able to do anything they wanted, because the – because the Germans would let them do that, because they felt that they are, in a certain way, that they are pleasing them, and they – they were going to have them on their side when – when – when they need it. And this was actually a fact, because most of the – of the massacres were done by th – by the Lithuanians under – under the supervision – certain supervision of the Germans.

Q: Tape change.

End of Tape Two

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Beginning Tape Three

Q: Did you – and the other thing is, anything that you sort of firsthand saw, that's always valuable.

A: I – I saw the – because I was almost trapped in this – when – when they – what had happened with the tank, you know? I saw that, it was in my vicinity. And then the – my uncle was very smart, he actually took the – I mean, he took the position to sit in-inside the apartment, then we have to [indecipherable] to sit inside. And fortunately, we were living in a – in a place where were – there were not many Jewish people there. And the – the – the – the manager of this place, because it was mostly offices, and the manager of the place was very, very nice Lithuanian guy, you know, exceptional. And he would not – they came, I mean, a few occasions, to ask him whether there's some Jews living there, and he would say that, not to his knowledge, you know. I mean, he – he actually saved us, you know. It wouldn't be for him, we would be [indecipherable]. But the first days, I mean, it was a complete [indecipherable]. I mean, it's – the – we – I had myself, have – have seen people beaten and – and – and hurt, and especially what happened in **Lietūkis** with this – with this horses, you know. This was a – we – we have a – we – we have seen not exactly what happened there, but we have seen the – well, the way they took in the people, and – and we – we know for a fact, I mean, I – there were also pictures

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about it. But they – they have – there were a few thousand people who were – who were documented as – as killed in the first – in the first few days. And these were people that – that they s – not only they run to the highway, but people who were just systematically taken out from their houses. They went with their list, apparently they had a list of – of addresses, would take them out and then just – not – it – it wa – shooting was not th-the – the great part, but – but to torture, all kind of ways of torturing, you know, like chopping off a arm, a-and especially also with children. That was terrible, and all, but what they have done with – with children, like smashing them against the wall, or – and most of the time they were drunk, you know. Because for one thing is the Lithuanians knew – I mean, they were very educated in – in drinking. They used to made – make a lot of homemade – homemade vodka. It was called **samagonda**(ph), it was made from potatoes. And this was, like in the times of prohibition, you know, th-this – this was – you know, due to the fact of the climate, that we have a cold climate, there are very many, many drunks on the – on the streets. There were always many drunks, and – and – and this drinking didn't help the situation in the beginning, because they had that available, they – they took over some places where there were all kinds of – of liquor, an-and – and wine, and – and they – they would empty this out, and th – th-this – this was also something that they had in common with the Russians, who

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were also very good in that, you know, in drinking. So th-that – they had the first – the first few days there were numerous amounts of – of people that were – they were counted possibly in the couple thousands of them, yeah.

Q: How did they – was there a way that they selected – I mean, did they

[indecipherable]

A: They – they – they had – they had lists. They – they came out – apparently somebody submitted them, they had lists with addresses, and they – and beside that, even they didn't have a list, they used to come in, smash in, break into the door, and say – and they would right away spot who is who. And there was something else.

Something else I have to mention is that right after – after we were – after the Germans came in, they came about 15 – two weeks afterwards, we had to start using the yellow stars. This was a – first, in the beginning on the front, and then we had to use them front and back. And they cannot be clipped in, they had to be sewn in, cause clipped in they claim that you can take it off, and so – so they, right away they knew how to identify. And there was also a very strict order, those people who wouldn't wear a – a – a Jewish star, they would not ask any more questions. That would be the – the end of – of those – this person that would not carry the – the star. So –

Q: How did you feel about wearing that?

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A: About?

Q: How did you feel about wearing the star?

A: First, in the beginning I felt like I – like I – I have a chip on my shoulder, you know. But then you – you get used, you know, we're in – we're – we're creatures of – of – of – of nature, of – of getting – getting used to things, you know, after – there is [indecipherable] saying, I mean, that you sleep over one night with a problem, and the next morning, I mean, there – there's no problem, th-th-the – your – th-then you have already a other problem, which – which comes across, you know, but so – and that's true, you know, it's – in a certain way we – there was also a question why – why we didn't resist. There were some – some cases of resistance. There was a case of a schoolmate of mine, his name was **Discant**(ph), that he dressed himself as a – as a German officer, and – [interruption, break] He – he – there were formed, small groups of resistance, really in – were in the forming. They were a little older than myself, they were a little more mature. Those who – who started – who started organizing. And there was a friend of mine, already a friend that we used to – he used to come to my house, and we used to – to not only go to school together, but to have some and certain things in common, you know. So he – he was dressed as a – dressed a German officer, and they – they were supposed to escape to the forest, you know, to pro at – I mean, to institute their resistance. And apparently the guy,

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the chauffeur that's supposed to take them, betrayed them. And then – and that was already not the Lithuanians, but the Germans caught them, and they took them to the Gestapo and they shot them, all of the, you know, there were like 14 people and one of – he was one of those. So there were start – and the question is, why didn't you have resistance. Because the Russian army that was there, and they had their – their – their arms, and they were not resisting, because they saw the handwriting on the wall, they saw what actually happened, they saw the might. And when the – I remember the day the Germans came in, and I looked through the window. My uncle used to pull me back, I shouldn't look through the window, because an-any moment, I mean, somebody can shot – shoot you, you know. Tha – when they came in, and they – and they paraded in the street, they came in clean, with their boots shining, you could – like mirrors, you know, and with loudspeakers. Ahead of them were Lithuanians who were pronouncing that the victorious German army is coming in, that they – this is only a – are going to be established here. But the army is going to move on, and – and finish with the – with the – with the Soviets, and it's a matter only of a short time. They expect to do that within the summer. That was – that was June. So they figured, June, July, August, September, October gets ready. So they – they thought their – they were projecting to occupy the **Soviet Union** about four or four months, you know, which they – **Napoleon** was not able to do

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that also, you know. He had the same – the same pattern. But resisting, I – it – it – it was – everybody was on the shock, you know. And – and normally, we people were not ready for – for resisting. We have never had an-anything, any training in – in – in – in arms. When I know that later on, I'm going to tell you that – which I hi – will tell you now, that I used to, in many cases I used to take off my – my stars, and – and then used to go out and I was blondish, I didn't look too much as – well, non-Jewish, and I used to go out and – and trade certain things in order to get – to get some food, because their f – the food situation became very critical, very critical. As soon they took us into the ghetto, they – they started in – they started taking brigades, they were called brigades. When a brigadier creates – they instituted a – a police, a Jewish police was in the ghetto, and then they instituted also the – a Jewish council. So, first of all they were – had to repair to fix the airports. So everybody was compelled to go out in the morning, five o'clock in the morning had to be in the reunion place, and then they used to come and – with guards, and – and walk to the – to the airport. So I remember they used to give us 200 grams of bread, and I used to put it in the pocket, an-and by the time I came to the – to the airport, and when they used to give us some soup, which was made of water, and well, with some – some vegetables, some kind of this [indecipherable] vegetables, you know. And they used to boil that, and by that time I didn't have really bread, because walking, I

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– I used to chew off on the portion of bread. So the situation of – the food situation became very – the – the – the duration was very, very bigger. And we – we had to trade sometimes, certain objects with the – with Lithuanians. So, in the beginning, they used to let the – we were able to do that, but there were some – some people who didn't have a heart, from the Lithuanian side, you know. For instance, used to trade a – a – a suit for a – for a kilo of butter. So after you – you have to do that fast, you know, because they – you had to do that when the guard was with his back to – to you, you know. So, in the desperation you found out sometimes that instead of butter, what you had is a big stone, on that – I mean, with – with a – with a little bit – with a little bit of butter on – on the sides, you know. And it was disaster, and you – you were unable to do anything, you know, that's – those people who were free had all the rights. We were – we – we lost [indecipherable] lost, we were **inhunamen** – I mean, not – not considered human. They – although they didn't tattoo us with – with – on the beginning [indecipherable] afterwards in – when they took to the concentration camp. So life was – was terrible, especially in the beginning, it – it-it was very hard to – to get the – get used to and accommodate it, but – but there was no – no choice. You had to – you had to do what you were told to do, you know, it's –

Q: Was the move to the ghetto itself chaotic, or was it – how was it organized –

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A: No, it was – it was very organized.

Q: You s – then you say, the move to the ghetto was very organized.

A: Was very –

Q: No. We need –

A: – very much – the move – the move to the ghetto was very organized. Was very organized in the sense that you would hardly see fights between people that, no I want this house, I want that house. There were certain – that was certain way organized that you were able – of course, you had to get yourself a – somebody – a horseman with a buggy and – and be able to – to carry over, and couple pieces of furniture, and mostly the – the – your personal belongings. But it was in a certain way – it was in certain way organized, because by – by the people themselves. You know, it's not – we di – we didn't have – we had a certain leadership which was already instituted, but it was not a – a – a full time leadership, it was just – they came with the least, and they told you look, you have to go here, here, here, and you have to do this and this and it, and wa – you know, the people were very much organized, and very much respectful, you know, we're – we're not – we were not strict people, you know, it was mostly people who were – who had a certain background, and you hardly were able to find somebody that was not educated, that was not able to read or write. This was – you take from the Lithuanians, you had

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like 50 percent for the people were illiterate, you know, especially those who lived on the farms, they – they – they didn't know how to read or write. They used to put a cross for – when they had to sign something, you know. And this was the sad part, you know, because people who are not literate, and who drink a lot and who don't have any – any – any – any feeling towards – towards **[indecipherable]** humans, they – they become – they become very – they become like animals, you know, and – and this is what – what happened there, and I really regret to say that, that there were, of course cases whereby they harbored Jews, they helped to escape, and there's – but that was sporadic, I mean, that was like a one percent, or something, that – that have – were human. And this was also most people who were a little bit better educated, and who actually knew the facts, and – and who – who were able to – to analyze, and – and – and realize that saving somebody in these critical times, although they expose their lives, because any – anybody that saved a Jew was like – oh, it – would be – would be shot the same way, like the – those people that they saved.

Q: Basically, as soon as the Germans occupied **Kovno**, life, as you all knew it, stopped. I mean, that –

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: – nobody went to school, and –

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A: No, no. There were no schools there. But amazingly – amazingly that in the ghetto, we were like 30 some thousand people, were pushed into this couple square kilometers in very inhuman conditions. But th-the – the ghetto life right away – I mean, we right away organized ourselves. We had like – we had a – a – a el-elder's [indecipherable] which was a council, with a head of the council, which was a prominent – a prominent doctor. For many years, a Lithuanian – he was a **M.D.**, and he – he was considered one of the top doctors in **Lithuania**, Dr. **Elkes**. And he was very strict, very – in the beginning he didn't want to take the job, but the – the other people from the – I mean, the head people from the ghetto came to him, and they pleaded with him that he should – he should there – they need him, because first of all, his perfect German, and his perfect Lithuanian, and perfect Russian, and he was already educated, very cultured person. And beside that, the respect that even those – the – the – the – the – the captors had for – for him, in a certain way, his known – his name was very, very prominent. So they felt with this respect him – the Germans expressed very big respect for him, although they compelled this council to do their dirty work in – in many cases. But many of those who belonged to the council, and then the council instituted a ghetto police. And we had like over a hundred police officers. Their whole uniform was only a – a hat, and a armband what say, Jewish police. Plus the fact they had to use also the – the stars, the same

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like everybody else. But these police was very instrumental in – in many cases, in many – after we were already established in the ghetto, we had a – most of the people had already a regular – I mean, some regular job, work, you know, the job was because – nobody paid for the job. They hardly gave you sufficient food to – for your sustenance, you know. But when – when – for instance, myself, I worked in the beginning in the **flugplatz**, that's an airport. And not only worked, I put in extra time, I was –

Q: Speaking of airports.

A: Yeah. It's especially – you know, it's strange, you know, you – you – when you go back to your country, you go back to the city, which looked when you were very – when you were small, I mean, it looked to you that it's a fantastic city, because you didn't know better, you know. When you go back and you see, and – and – and you walk this same distance that you used to walk on the garden before, it seems to you so small, and so insignificant, you know, it's a – it's pathetic, you know? So I remember we used to walk on – under guard, with loaded rifles like – like supercriminals and all the – although there were no cases – very few cases of resistance within the – within the ghetto, within the – the – the establishment. And you – you call – you do your work, and you come back after a day's work, whereby you have guards there, and they constantly changed. In the beginning they had the

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German guards, but then they start to bringing in the – the [**indecipherable**] the Russian Ukrainians, and then brought in Hungarians. And believe me, these guards, they were **incompassionate**. They used to beat you up every time you – you – you had to – to work, I mean without – almost without food, but constantly, and under supervision, and within the cold weather, they – they used to put a – a some a – a side fire in our work. From time to time you would come and – and warm up your hands, you know, you had the mittens, or the – but that do – didn't mean anything now, because if your body doesn't have fuel, I mean, you – you are – you still cold – it gets colder than in normal, when you have food. And they used to have special – special woods – wood sticks, which they would beat you up, you know, ev-every time, and without – without mercy. And every time you used to go to warm up, you stayed a little bit longer than what you supposed to, you know, which was prohibited to do that in the beginning, but you would do it – come out, because when the – and so my uncle was – he was a sick man, you know, he – so I used to work for him, I – sh – because there were a few shifts, there was like a 24 hour day, around the clock, to work at the airport, because they want to re-re-reestablish the airport, and – in order to be able to use that for their – for their own – for their own use, for their – and life was – was terrible. Of course, it – it gradually was in – in changing. In the beginning it was a ghetto. Then after – after a while it became a

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concentration camp, and we have received the – before we were under the **Wehrmacht**, under the military. Then we – we came under the jurisdiction of the **Obersturmführer Gecker**(ph), and that was the **SS**. It's funny now this calls the – the **[indecipherable]**. So the **SS**, they were – they were terrible. They – they were still much worse than the **Wehrmacht**, because the **Wehrmacht** you found sometimes between the same guards, who were schoolteachers, who were, you know, they're – they were – they were called to – to duty. But there were still certain aspects of – of humanity, at one point, you know. But this – this **[indecipherable]** came in, and then they declared that as a concentration camp. So we came – we became a – a – a – in a different status, whereby this was right after – after the big **aktia**(ph), which was October 20th – 28th, 1941, is when they – when they came in with loudspeakers and they announced that next morning, five o'clock in the morning, after we have in a – in a special – a special large place, that everybody has to be out. Nobody can stay in the house. Not even the sick people can stay in the house. Everybody has to be out. If they find somebody inside, they will shoot him. So, next morning, everybody came out, and the – took some food, and they – they said that you take – if you had some food, take with you, because you're not going to be provided with any – any food. So everybody came out, and suddenly a few German trucks came in, and it was – with guards, and they – they

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surrounded the place, and then the – the head of the Gestapo that time was a guy by the name of **Rauca. Joseph**, I think was his name, **Rauca**, and was a big German, a heavyset guy, and they came with dogs, and they started – they started – first of all, they searched houses, spot searched, whatever they can find somebody. And they as-assured themselves nobody there. They start pulling people to the left and to the right. Well, right away we saw that the people that they pulled to the left are mostly children, elderly people, people who are – have some blemish, or have some – some – some kind of paleness, or some kind of defect, you know. And I remember I had a little coat, you know, was a – was a fur – you know, the – the collar. So – and it was a cold – a cold [**indecipherable**] was October, it was already winter, basically in the – almost snow was – we were going to see. There were signs that snow was going to fall there. So then, I had my – my grandmother was with me, and I knew that they are going to call her. So, it was like instinctively, you know, when they pull her away. And when the German turned around, I pulled her back, and I was able to save her, you know, right, yeah, she was still with us for a couple more years afterward. But then they – they took out all those people, and they took them away. And that was a whole day operation, and we came home. Of course, we understood that they are taking them to a certain special assignment. I would like also to mention that the – the 500 intelligentsia, the people that they took out right – right

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after the ghetto was closed, we found out in the next few days, that those was the first 500 people that they took to the , and they shot them all. Because their aim and their interest was to – to get rid of the – of – of more intelligent people, or people who are – who can plan, and who were – who had certain – certain qualifications, you know, that they wanted to – to get rid of them right away. And – and then there – there were – they were in a certain way right, and they were, in a certain way they have accomplished their – their – their doing. Now this time – that was 500. Now this time, on October 28th, they took them also to the **Ninth Fort**, and they also shot them, and there were 10,000 of them. They – they had – they were more ready for these 10,000 than for the 500, because they already had excavated. They had – they had a brigade that they took ahead of time, and they didn't know what – that was a – a small **aktion**, which they took about a few dozen people. And their – their job was to excavate in the vicinity of the **Ninth Fort**. And fort was large, you know, those forts were established by the Russians, and they were specially kept for – for protection of the city. You see, **Kovno** was surrounded by the **Third Fort**, the **Seventh Fort**, the **Ninth Fort**. There were like four forts. And they were done by the – still by the – by the Russians. They were at high – at high levels, and – and they were – had a – places for – for – for soldiers, and – and – and of course they had places for

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inmates. So they – those were the 10,000 that were – they – they liquida – so they actually cut by one-third, right away, the ghetto. This was also in conjunction with the burning, and with the – of the small ghetto. You see, when the ghetto was instituted, they had the large ghetto, and they had the small ghetto. What was the difference? The difference was that one main thoroughfare, one main road, run through the – through the ghetto, between the small and the large. And what they did is – what they – what they did is they instituted a – they built a bridge from the large ghetto to the small ghetto, which was also surrounded with wires, and that was always under military supervision. So the – the beginning, and this – in the small ghetto they had a hospital. There was a hospital that they converted, they have arranged for that, and they had a hospital with very, very – we had quite a number of doctors, and had quite a number of – of – of patients, people who were ill, who were sick, who were – who were old, who needed – who needed care, and there were also some women who were pregnant, you know. So this hospital was full to capacity. And one day what they decided is that – that they felt that – apparently that they don't need a hospital, and they don't need no sick people. So what they did is they surrounded the hospital, they surrounded that with haystack around. They poured gas. They nailed the doors in the hospital, and they burned – everybody was burned there, including the doctors, including the nurses, including the – including

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the – including the pregnant women, including the – there was such a terrible – I mean, the – the – you – you could smell the – the – the stench, you know, the – the people. And right after that they had the – the big **aktia**(ph), and then they – they eliminated completely – this small ghetto was completely, those few people who still were there were evacuated, were passed to the – to the – to the bigger ghetto, because it became more room available by – by eliminating 10,000 people, it was too much room, you know, basically, based – based on they – on their standard. But this was a terrible, terrible, terrible act of aggression, you know, the – this – this was – in human history you find these cases only in times of the Romans, you know, that's – which also they had more compassion, you know, for certain – for – like for children, for – for – for – for babies, and then old people and so on.

Q: [indecipherable]

End of Tape Three

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Beginning Tape Four

A: I have to mention that also, that – can I go on? Also being in the ghetto was very traumatic, but the chairmans from time to time, they called up Dr. **Elkes** and they said, we need hundred people for a special assignment. Nobody knew whether this assignment is for real or whether it is to take out and to shoot people, but there were some real assignments. So I remember the **Arbeitsamt**, which was the place where the – where the council was, and it was a special building assigned – it was also a place that had also a jail. Because within the ghetto, there were sometimes found some people who are – who stole and who did certain acts of – which was not permitted, you know. So I remember that when the police head in – in the **Arbeitsamt**, the – the council, they had a – a very difficult task, whom to take out? I mean, the chairmans told them we need hundred people. I mean, there were also certain favoritism, which has to – I mean, happens from time to time, you know, because if you have a – if you are a police officer and you have a relat – a relative that they want him out, I mean, you would – you would try to protect him rather than somebody you don't know. So in many cases, it was a very, very difficult job for the – for the – for the **elderat**(ph), for the – for the council to take. What they opted to do is, most of the time, is people who didn't have families, people who – who didn't have – who were not rooted for, for some reason, whom they had some

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grievances or some problems with them, problematic, you know. Because many people have just collapsed mentally under this pressure, you know, not everybody was able to be withstand that, you know, because it was – it was like the game of the cat and – and the mouse, you know, and it bites off one leg and then the other one. I mean, it was a constant game, you know, and especially when – when the – when the Gestapo used to appear and come into – to the ghetto. I mean, it was very traumatic. I have also to mention to you is about were – because it came to my mind about **Rauca**. I had a personal – after I finished at the airport, I got myself a good brigade. Mine was good because I worked in a – for some reason they – they formed a new one and I was at the right time at the right place. They formed a brigade in a marmalade factory – and this was fantastic, you know – which had like – our brigadier was a guy by the name of **Motts(ph)**, who survived incidentally the ghetto [**indecipherable**] later in Italy. And I was very friendly with – with him and I was able to stick to this brigade after – especially after the **flugplatz**, this was like a – a new life. Brigade was – we had to – that was a – a factory of marmalade and right next to that was also a place where they used to produce sauerkraut and sour pickles – pickled – pickled, you know, cucumbers. And at least you had – you were able to – to – to get some food, you know, because sauerkraut and pickles and marmalade, it's already a meal. And plus the fact marmalade is made with sugar and

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sugar is very heavy. I remember they – they used to – I was compelled – I was pretty strong, you know, and I was compelled to – to take up bags of hundred kilo sugar – which is 225 pounds – to the third floor, where the – where they had the mixing of the – of the marmalade. And sometimes what I used to do is, I used to punch a hole in the bag and I had a – this – this coat that you see on this – on this picture, on this one. My grandmother had made, like a – a double – a double-deck, you know – a double – I mean, of the – the lower part. And –

Q: Let – let – I'm sorry. Can we start that thought again and just say, I had a coat that my grandmother –

A: Okay, I had a coat that my grandmother fixed it up in such a fashion that she made like a – hidden pockets. And when I carried the sugar, I used to punch a hole in the – in the bag and the su – then – and make from – from paper, make like a little canal, and I used to canal the – canal the sugar from – from the bag, directly to my – to my coat, you know. And this – this was very, very helpful in a certain way to survive because sugar is – is very nutritious. And – and in one case, there were – we had a – a – a German civilian who was very much connected to the Gestapo. One – and beside that, what I used to do also, I used to steal marmalade. But the only way to steal that was in – in – we had like – like they have now – you know, the metal **Coca-Cola** containers – using a container. And – and many times I

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burned my – my st – my – my stomach because I used to steal that and I used to insert it right here, and then with a coat, I used to close it up. And – and I used to pull it out from the ber – from the na – I – I was not able to have accessibility to this when it was already placed in a cool place, so I had to take that when it was hot. And this was – it was sometimes terrible. But notwithstanding that, I felt that the – the – the pain of the – of the burning was worth it in order to – to accomplish the – the – to accomplish the aim – you know, the goal.

Q: I want to ask you a question. **Rae**(ph) had – when **Rae**(ph) talked to you the other day, she mentioned that you said something about carrying sugar up to the Gestapo.

A: Yeah, that was in – in my – in my school, where I went, to the gymnasium. I had – I was sent – twice, I was sent there for special work, also carrying 225 pounds of on to – also to the top floor. They converted our school to a – they made it to a – to a storage place. And – and we had to – we had to do that, and that was – that was before that.

Q: Okay. Would you tell me – you tell me about that though?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. About –

Q: What did you do, because I'm –

A: I – what I did is, we had to carry these bags of – they used to take us with the

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truck, come to the main entrance, and we used to have to – to – about five or six of us, go up to the top floor where they had the – the sugar, and they had the – had the purpose to place that in a high level, that it should not be stolen or something. So they – we – we used to carry – carry them to – to the cert – to certain places for – for – for stirring purposes. And – but that was not related to the marmalade factory, which it was a separate –

Q: Okay. But while we're on that, who was up there?

A: There was a – there was a military storage for the – for the German – for the German army. And it was not precisely Gestapo, it was a military. Gestapo is – I was – I was threatened by this **Meyer**(ph), when I was in the factory. One day he caught me with – with this – with this marmalade, and he just waved his finger and says, next time, you're going to go to the Gestapo if I catch you. It was – it was something like that. So he was very generous at that time, you know. He just kicked me and that's all, and took away the –

Q: When you – when you went up to take the sugar to the stor – this military storage place, did you hear people talking, did you see anything that was particularly interesting?

A: Not – we were too busy in – in – in carrying again, and be able to carry the load. That was – that was – actually, my mi – our mind was blanked out at that time. We

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– we were not able even to communicate because they – they used to – when – when it came to a – to a job like this, it's not like the airport where you had a shovel and a – and a pick and you have to dig and this. You know, this – this was – they had to be unloaded in a – in a certain time and they – and you had to – you had to rush. And if you wouldn't rush, they – they just clubbed you. So at this – this moment, you were – you were just trying to – to keep up with your strength, in order to be able to fulfill the – ful-fulfill the – the job. There was also, in – in cases before I – I became – I start working – notwithstanding if we worked at this [indecipherable] brigade, from time to time, they take – took us to some other places. And I have to tell you something which is – which was very much inscribed in my – in my memory, is that [indecipherable] in the – in 1941, beginning '42, they brought to **Lithuania**, echelons – train loads with the boxcars, you know, of people from **Austria** and from **Czechoslovakia** and from some other places. And amazingly –

Q: I've got to stop you. I hate doing [break]

A: So that –

Q: Actually, I need that you to start that whole –

A: Yeah. There's a very remarkable something that I have to bring it up because there are certain aspects of me being in the – in the camps that – that I have to

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highlight. And one of them is that this incredible experience that I had. And namely, they start bringing, to the railroad station, echelons – boxcars with the Jews from **Austria** and **Germany**. They called that, we found out later, the Hebrew **siedlung**. Hebrew **siedlung** basically means, place from one – take them from one place and put them to other place, in German. And these train came with cars loaded with pianos, with furniture, with all kinds of luxury items, to make believe to those people, when they – because you see, when they took out from **Germany** or from **Austria**, Jews to send them to – to their – to their massacre, to their – I mean, to their – to their graves, to their killings, was – apparently, they had a certain – a certain – had to handle it in a certain way. They tried to convince them that they are being taken to other place, just only to – they have to take them to – to – to other places. So when they came – and at that time, I was working for the Gestapo brigade. There was a special brigade which was the Gestapo brigade and many people have tried very hard to work in this brigade, because this brigade was always connected with certain – certain things that had to do with food. And there was many possibilities to – to fill up your stomach, you know, to be – to – not to be hungry. And this time they needed additional – additional people. So apparently, they took me and they took a – a group of other people to that task. And I – and I saw the way this echelons came, and I saw that they came in – in like, in plush

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trains. It was not the – the – some – some boxcars came also at the same time, but they came for a – for – for a purpose of – of baggage and – and some other things. But these trains came with – and the people with their jewelry, with everything, and – and you could see very high standard people who came. And I knew exactly what they are doing with – what they are going to do with them. Before – this **Rauca** came over to us, he pulled out his pistol and we were like, six trucks, six guys, and he said to us – he said, you see, I forbid you to communicate and to talk to these people. There is no way that you can exchange some words, absolutely nothing. If I see your lips moving, I know that you are trying to tell them something or give – send them a message, so there is going to be nothing else than a bullet through your head. And he just like, took his pistol and – and – and – and just scraped our – our – our faces, you know, with that, to – to – to impress upon us that he means business, you know. The difficulty was by knowing what – what's going to happen to those people. How do we tell them – or whether – whether to tell them was the right thing, or not to tell them. It was so difficult. Now, our task was to take out from the windows, a German with – with loudspeaker would say to the – say to one of the cars – plush cars and say [**speaks German**]. It means, give me your packs. You have a few kilometers. You have to go a few kilometers, please give out your packages because it's going to be very burdensome and we are going – pla-placing

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these packages in the trucks and we are going to deliver them. And make sure to inscribe your names on the packages so we are going to know how to return that to you. I knew that that's – that's fallacy. I mean, this is – where they are taking them is to the **Ninth Fort** and it's – it's about 10 or 12 miles walking. It's not a couple of kilometers. And that's what's going to happen to them. And in one case, I saw a lady, which I – pretty young lady, and – and I really felt – with her husband, felt – a couple apparently – and I felt very bad and I – I tried to – to explain to them, to tell them that – of course, we were already involved in taking the packages, and – and I – I – I looked around, I didn't see **Rauca** there, apparently he went to have something to drink or something. And – and I said to them that, they are taking you to your death. Try – when – when you – when – when you will march, try to – to escape or try to – to do something or something. You know, the people didn't believe me. They just didn't trust me. They trusted the Germans by that time, but they didn't – they didn't trust me. They looked at me and looked at me, and they looked at me like I am – like I am trying to – and then I – I – I felt very bad about the fact – I mean, I – I – I – I felt scared that they should not – they should not give me – turn me over, or say that I tried to – to tell them. This – this was the – this was the **fanatism**. Th-The German – the German Jews were very big fanatic. They felt that they were first Germans and then Jews. That was their big – their big problem.

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They were – they – they eliminated from their prayer books, **Jerusalem** – it would say, next year in **Jerusalem**. They used to put in, next year in **Berlin**. Th-Th-This – this incident I remember so vividly. And I remember when we took the packages, and we took them directly to the Gestapo. And the Gestapo, they had a big – a big warehouse where they just threw them in one big pile and then they used to have a – those people who worked at the Gestapo used to sort them out and place – for instance, place different items in – based on a list that they had, which items have to go here and there. You know, they were very meticulous and very organized. The Germans, they were extremely organized. I mean, when it came to organization it was – I mean, they were leaders in the world on that, you know.

Q: Was this in –

A: This was –

Q: – November, December?

A: This was – I'm not sure, but I think it was in the beginning of the – of '42 or the middle of '42 or something, that it happened at that time, you know, and they – and I know for a fact that they – they were taken to the **Ninth** and **Seventh Fort** and they were – and they were massacred there, yeah.

Q: Do you know how many there were?

A: There were many – there were – there were thousands. There a few – at least,

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based on which – I found out after 5,000 or 6,000. They have even inscriptions in the **Ninth Fort**, where they held them for overnight. Many inscribed – inscribed their names on the walls. And they left certain – certain – certain inscriptions, thinking that maybe somebody is going to find and find out.

Q: You know that there was a huge transport from I don't know where in Europe in November of '41, where they brought, I think, 5,000 people in and –

A: May-Maybe that was – what was – I – I – I truthfully – I – I –

Q: Yeah. That's okay

A: – I ju – I ju – I just cannot synchronize my – my mind with – with the – with the dates, because to me, it was a – you see, to me and I think to everybody, was – a minute was a – a day and a second was an hour and – an-and – and a day was a – was a year, you know. It's a – it was – the torture was just beyond comprehension.

Q: The –

A: And then, of course, we found out 1941, that in the small cities they took out everybody. And they – they didn't put them in the camps or ghetto or anything, but they took them out and – and in – in – in certain secluded spaces and they made them dig graves and then they – they shot them there. And there was mostly Lithuanians have done this, under supervision of the – of the Germans. I – I have a book here which is – describes city by city when it happened and how it happened.

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And it happened to be that my father was one of the eld-eldest in the – in **Rokiškis**, and – him and the other one. And he was offered to – to – they offered him that he was to – to give him some harbor – shelter, you know, harbor him, and at – himself, but he said, it has to be the whole family. They said, the family we cannot do, you yourself. He said no way. Wherever the family goes, I – I go. And of course, afterwards, last – two years ago I was in **Lithuania**, and I went to the place that – very secluded small place, a few kilometers from the city where they took there – there were like 2,750 people, children, elderly, and – which they – they have massacred – massacred them there. They kept them for a short time. We had a – in our city we had a little lake, and there was – there was a count that had his palace there, still from the times – times [**indecipherable**]. So in this – this place, they – they made – and then he had some stables for horses. So right there they made certain accommodations and they kept there, the people, you know, for – for a few days and then they took them out to this, three kilometers from the city, the name was **Boryar**(ph). And you had to go through a narrow path, you know, and there was, like a wooded area and they took them there and there – there is a – they have a monument there, on the – and they – they shot them – all of them there.

Q: Did you have much information in terms of what was happening in other towns when you were –

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A: Very – very – very – very little information. You know, they – we were kept away from newspapers, from – but, of course, when we went to – to – outside to work in the brigades, we had sometimes opportunities to – to exchange views with some Lithuanians. We had also a case where I had my cousin **Eric(ph) Adoen(ph)**, where we worked together. One – one day they took us to **en-ess-ka-ka(ph)**, that was a – **NSKK**, it's called **en-ess-ka-ka(ph)** in German – which they – they – that was a – a special unit, that they took us to – to cut s – it was winter. It was snowing. It was – it was Christmas – before Christmas eve. And they took us to a place and we had to cut some wood. And it was cold and the – the guard – lady – it was a Lithuanian lady, she felt pity on us, you know. She owned – she was a – a opera singer. And she invited us to come in to warm up and then she gave us a little soup and some other things. And then she – we were reminded, my cousin. She kind of blessed us and told us that she hopes that we are going to live through this dark chapter and – and survive. But – and – and the guard that was with us was – also was a – this was too, before it became a – a concentration camp. He was also from the **Wehrmacht**, and was a very – very nice guy and was also shivering, you know. At least we were cutting wood and we had – the blood was flowing through our veins and we were a little warm but he had – he all the time he just patted himself not to – that was a – a very – there are some moments, you know, that you – you

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remember, you know, vi-vividly. I remember exactly the house where – in my back mind – the way where we were, cutting the wood and the way she invited us to the house and that she – she had even tears in her eyes, and she said that – she was very human, you know, was very much against what – what – what was going on and happening. She talked to us in Lithuanian, the guard didn't understand anyway, so – so she was very open. And right away she gave us tea and some – some soup and some piece of bread. Incidentally, Lithuanian food was very good bread, the – the – the butter, and all this. We – **Lithuania** used to export to **England**, all kinds of farm products to – to England in large numbers. Now, of course, when the Russians came, I mean they – they took out everything. I mean, they devastated the country. They eliminate many, many – we have cows in – in the – in the thousands, you know, the –

Q: Back to the ghetto –

A: Pardon?

Q: Let's –

A: Back to the ghetto.

Q: Right, back to the ghetto.

A: Yeah, back to the – back in ghetto.

Q: Did everybody in the ghetto go out on these work brigades?

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A: There were some – some factories within the ghetto. They were mostly for youngsters and for people who learned a trade. I had, for instance, a teacher of mathematics by the name of **Faulkman**(ph). He was a brilliant, brilliant guy. He became a shoemaker in the ghetto. And you know, if you had a trade you had more – more possibilities to – to survive and to – you know, especially, you know, there were many Germans that used to come in and say, look, my boots are – fix them – and this and that, and – or my – need some buttons here, and I need certain things to – to be fixed. And tradespeople were able to – to fulfill their requirement. Now, there were – basically the – the ghetto were **stattin**(ph), that's the way they were called. The ghetto factories were – basically what they did is they used to – to manufacture there many items for the army, like, all kind of uniforms – everything from uniforms, from hats, from underwear, from – from boots. And – and we had shoemakers and we had tailors and we had – we had all kind of tradespeople who were there. We had also something very interesting, which is going to surprise you, that I'm going to tell you. We had a symphony orchestra within the ghetto. We had people who were very talented, extremely talented. They – they were performing sometimes with the permission of the – of the – of the guards and so forth. We had to announce that – that we're going to have a concert – a concert there. There were people – writers who wrote and who – and of course, doctors. I could mention to

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you now, we didn't have a hospital, so we made a provisional place where we used to take care of sick people, and – but the word was, don't get sick if you want to survive. And that was, don't get sick if you want to survive. So how can you prevent that? Sometimes, you know, with the snow and the bad weather and the colds. But the – the instinct, you know, the force of wanting to survive was sometimes so – so strong, you know, that is stronger than – than – than – than any bacteria or anything. You know, they over – you can overcome something. And this is without food. And I myself, when I used to work in **sadiva**(ph) –

Q: I think we have to change the tapes.

End of Tape Four

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Beginning Tape Five

Q: Were the workshops or factories used as a way to essentially hide people?

A: They used to – we had also, sometimes a influx from people who were wandering around, and they didn't find themselves on the outside. They were being harbored by some Lithuanians, but up to a point, they start in jeopardizing their lives with the Lithuanians. So in many cases, some of the people came back to the ghetto. And they – how did they come back? They infiltrated through the brigades that used to come, they used to sneak in some way, and they used to come in. Now, some of those people, you had to establish them, you had to give them ma – because we had identification cards. Everyone in the ghetto has a identification. We had to falsify a card, put them in, and some of those people also became employed in the ghetto **estattin**(ph) – in – in the ghetto factories. They were – some of them, they were also harboring, in certain cases, sometimes preparing some weaponry, making – making bullets, and other – in – in the – '41, we had already a – a guy by the name of **Jaime**(ph) **Jellin**(ph). **Jellin**(ph) was a very educated, very intelligent young man whose family was known for many years. They had a – they had bookstores. And they had – they were – they were very, very known in the – in the community as – as very educated, and – and very intelligent people. So this **Jellin**(ph), who was a really brain, he start forming quietly – he was in contact with

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a – you know, when people used to go out to work in the brigades, there were certain contacts, from time to time, with some Lithuanians, and some Jewish people who lived their life like Lithuanians. And through them, through contacts – which in many cases they failed, because you never knew who is going to betray you. You had sometimes to have confidence. But there were passwords, and there were some certain ways of – of protecting yourself, and so they started this movement of getting people out, and – and getting in – getting to the woods. There was the – the understanding was that the Germans were very much afraid of the woods, because there were – there was already started a resistance. But you see, there were a **double** – a double – a double problem in this respect, because to get out from the ghetto, and to reach the woods, you had to cross, and you had to – to cr – g-get involved with some – with some Lithuanians, in – in many cases, and you really didn't know – you see, they were not the Germans. The – the biggest problem were the Lithuanians, because they know – they knew the Germans wouldn't – wouldn't differentiate a Jew from a Lithuanian, but the Lithuanians did – did – did – did know that. From my – for instance myself, I – I had few friends who were by themselves, and they – they decided they're going to join the – the partisans. There was a very good friend of mine, he was the son of the rabbi from **Šakiai. Šakiai** was a small city in **Lithuania. [indecipherable] Golden.** There was a other friend,

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who now lives in – [indecipherable] Golden. He has a – was a terrible – a terrible – a terrible end to this young, brilliant, bright man. He joined the partisans, and in a skirmish – they were some way betrayed in a skirmish. They had a – they – they had a fight between them and the – and – and the Germans, he was wounded. And they had to amputate his leg. And something happens th – happened that this is very, very, very – I mean, it's sometimes very hard to describe that. Til this day, I don't know who this was, because they wouldn't – they wouldn't say. They were a few of his colleagues. They had to pull a straw who should kill him, because they had to move out from this place and they didn't want to leave him suffering. So one – one – one of them pulled the straw and – and had to pull – put a bullet in his head, because they just couldn't cope with somebody that was wounded, was ha – that his leg had to be amputated, you know. He had gangrene. And this was a – was a prince – prince of a guy, you know, I remember – you know, it's – it's – was very sad, and – but they have a – I had a number of – of friends who – whom I knew exactly where they are going, and we used to supply them with, from time to time with – with products. And I will explain to you, and that's the reason why I wanted to tell you the story, what – what it came – what – what I learned to do. I used to – in many cases, I used to take out the – my – take off my stars. I used to go out and – and exchange – I used to have like shirts, or something else, you know, if I didn't

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have, I used to take from somebody else, became some – something like a – like a business. And then one day, we had our [indecipherable] the factory of the marmalade on one side of the street. On the other side of the street was a company by the name of **Pieno**(ph) **Sendris**(ph). That was a milk products, I would call it a factory, processing place, where they used to make yogurt, and – and buttermilk, and everything made from milk products. One say, while working in **sadiva**(ph), at break time, when we had lunch, I came down to the basement, and then I saw in the basement a – like a sewer pipe. A large pipe, was maybe 20 some inches of diameter. And then I start putting two and two together. I saw that pipe with direction was toward the street, and I told my f – one of my friends that I had there – and he happened to be his – his life as friends. We became sick later, and I – he used to work, and he used to help and was [indecipherable] told him, **Louis Prowther**(ph) is his name, he is now an engineer, he lives in **Israel**. I said, **Louis**, watch out for me. Let me see what's on the other end of the pipe. And I climbed in and I climbed through the pipe. And when I came out, I came out to the – to the heating place, you know, to the – you know, where they have the – the heating place for the – for the – for – for the building of the – the processing building of – you know, where they had the – the – what is that called? A – they – they had boiler rooms. And – and the guy, I saw a guy, a Lithuanian guy that was there, he just got

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– got – got – got scared when he saw, because for the pipe was there, then I came out like from a chimney, you know. I s – I am sure that he felt that the devil coming out there. But then I identified myself, I say I am from – from the other side, from the **sadiva**(ph), and I would like to find out what is – about their products what they have, whether there is a possibility that we can bring in some products of – milk products in the ghetto. To make the story short, from that day, I became very friendly with this guy, and I used to bring different items, exchange with him, and I used to carry back to the ghetto, all kinds of milk products. And they gave me a nickname, they called me **Tevye the Milchhiker**, you know, from shalo – from – from **Sholem Aleichem**, you know, that, from the – the famous play, you know, **Tevye the Milkman**? That was my na – I lost my name, I sa – and from that time I used to bring in a lot of – a lot of products, of milk products.

Q: What did you give them?

A: Pardon?

Q: What did you give them?

A: All kind of – all kind of cloth, you know. Shoes or whatev – whatever, shirts or something. If I didn't have myself, I used to trade with somebody. And I was now in – recently to **Israel**, and **Prowther**(ph) remembers that, he says – he remembers my nickname, you know. **Prowther**(ph), yeah. So this became a – a – a new trend,

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and truthfully, there were many people that were being – were helped by that, you know, because it was a – a some – a product which was – and this guy used to have that as – as mu – as much – as much as I was able to carry through, you know. In case that they would catch me, and it would spill it out, or they would hit me, or like in – in this picture, I remember that I – I had some potatoes that I brought in, and they searched us. But sometimes for five, there were Lithuanian guards. A guy, one guy, name was **Ratneris**(ph), I remember his name. And we – we knew already, he used to take five dollars to come in, when somebody came with certain – certain things, and he would – he would look the other way around him, and let you through, you know. So there were some tolerance, you know, some – some people. **Lorus**(ph) wouldn't – would do it – just search you, and find and – and beat you up, you know. But that was a – a incident which – which happened to me, and –

Q: You weren't carrying that stuff through the pipe?

A: Yeah, right. I used to attach that to my leg with a – with a piece of – of cord, and – and slide through, pull it – pull it in, you know. We made him – he made for us a – a special attachment which shouldn't be spilled out or anything, you know, that – special bottles, you know. There were that time, there were now – no paper cartons, so everything was in bottles. The refreshments were in bottles, large bottles like this.

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Q: Can you – can you just say the word pipe? Can you say I – I had to carry this out through – back through the pipe?

A: Of course. The – the only way to – to communicate, was through this pipe, which – whereby through this pipe, I was able to carry through different – different items, you know, of different products, and especially milk products. And this gave me certain fame in th – in the camp, this – well, the fame – nobody looked for fame because when the word spread too fast, that can be also counterproductive, because they would start watching you, and – and finding out, and this – this could mean a very bad end.

Q: How would you describe what the ghetto looked like?

A: The ghetto looked like a – like a little jail, comprised of individual houses and buildings. It looked like a – a prison, surrounded with barbed wire [indecipherable] guards with high lights. It looked like a place of – a place of no return, I would put it this way, because nobody of those beginning 33,000 people – although everybody dreamed – was getting liberated. But in – in his deep mind, he knew that this is a – thi-this is a – a – a dream that's never going to be fulfilled. It – it was as – as time went by, we – we found ourselves more secluded, more guarded, more – we – we found also when – when the front starts turning – turned around, and then like **Stalingrad**, we f – we felt that there is a certain additional pressure on us, because

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the Germans, they felt already that they are not – they didn't accomplish what they wanted accomplish in four months, because this winter was for the, like **Stalin** used to say, my best – the best general, is general winter. Well, this is what devastated the German army. It devastated them to a point, you know, the Germans, they – they were cut clean, shaved, nicely dressed, you know, nice with their uniform, with their – with their – this was a phase. But when they – when they were encountered by him, when they felt this terrible winter, you know, and where they didn't have the supplies, because partisans, and especially in the beginning, mostly Russian partisans have cut off the supplies – all the supplies line were just shattered. And they were not able to get the supplies, where they had to have their lice, and they had to have their – their – their flea, and – and the – and th-the discomfort, and not have the food in their time, and – and the rifles were – I mean, the cold winter was so cold their rifles were stuck, you know, they were not able to – to shoot when they had to shoot. And so they – they – they start – they had different thoughts, and the – and the punishment for those people that als – also in the camps, who were in there guarding the camps, was also to send them to the Russian front. The Russian front, the expression to send you to the Russian front was like a sentence of death to a German soldier. So they were – an-and when they were in this state of mind, that they saw that things have turned around, they also felt that they have to punish their

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what – wer – wer – what – how can they ex-express their – their frustration, their – their – their – their disappointment? They cannot say anything against their – against their – a-against their leadership, because they wouldn't do that to – dare to do that. So what they did is they – they put the biggest squeeze on – on the prisoners. They want to show their leadership that they are better equipped, they are better – they know better how to handle, how to – how to squeeze, and how to eliminate their – their prisoners. Their – this would give them like a – like a pat on the shoulder, saying you're doing a good job, you know.

Q: So the only way people got out of the ghetto would be with a work brigade?

A: Yeah, that's right, yeah. Some – some tried to escape, but they were –

Q: But the only legal way?

A: – they were – they were – legal – yeah, the legal way, yeah.

Q: Now you talked about some cultural activities. I'm trying to get a sense of what was going on in the ghetto –

A: We had –

Q: – did you have soup kitchens, did you have tutoring? Was there any semblance of normal routines?

A: There were in a certain way, certain routines, like we had – like I mentioned about the cultural life. We – we had like meetings whereby we had reading – beside

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reading the Torah, reading some scriptures or – or we had also poems. There were – there were composers, there were people who composed hidden music in ghetto.

We had – we had like hymns, which we chanted when we used to go out and – and walk, and sometimes we were quietly singing, you know, the – with – with incredible [**indecipherable**] with this – the partisan hymn was created also in – in – in the ghettos, you know [**sings partisan hymn**] You heard about that – no, you didn't hear the partisan hymn? You are missing something.

Q: Can you sing it with words?

A: I –

Q: You remember the words?

A: I – the words, I'm not – not very good in that, you know. I know it was freedom, you know, it's – it – the hymn is about that our destiny is being written not with – not with bullets from in a gun, which is a **Mauser**, but with – with blood. And we expect still to see the sunshine from the coming day, because we – we don't know what the next day is going to bring us, but we hope that the next day is going to give us a little bit more hope, more – more – more a way to survive, and to put everything behind us. It was basically that. That's called the partisan hymn. And of course, there were some other – some other songs that were – they were put together, and they were – had many, many times that – of course, everybody was

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tired, and in the few hours, the sleep was – was essential to – to be able to get up next morning at five o'clock and – and – and go through that there, because we were brought back in ghetto, was already nighttime, so we only had few hours. But within – even with – within this miserable life, we found ourselves certain – certain way of life which – which was like a shadow of the – of the normal life, you know, it – it – it was still – the hope was always very, very, very big, you know, it's – everybody – especially when the front turned around, and – and we saw that the Germans are getting nervous, you know, and day by day they went by. Then they started with the – the aks – **aktion** from the children.

Q: Okay, but let – let – I still want to stay on this a minute, more about what was –

A: But – but there – yeah – there was –

Q: – what was going on, were kids studying, were –

A: They were studying. We had – we had teachers, we had like a – a – like a school, without calling that by name school. Kids were being prepared. We had a – a ma – certain weddings in the get – and Bar Mitzvah in the ghetto. It was – yeah.

Q: Was this allowed, or –

A: It was – it was – it was – you know, they – in a certain way they – so long it was quiet, and no, it was not a – a rebellious trend, they – in certain occasion, they – they overlooked that. They wouldn't – they wouldn't get [**indecipherable**]. We –

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inside the ghetto we hardly had – only in – in special cases, we had Lithuanians, or – they were always on the outside, they were – sometimes, if they had somebody – betrayed somebody, or there was something investigation, they would come in, but normally – although when they would come in, they would go directly to the **Judenrat**, to **Elkes**, to meet with them. This was it. They met with them, and – and most of the time **Elkes** used to go to the Gestapo and meet with – with them there, to the city, or to **Bürgermeister**, the mayor of the city. But normally, within the city, there was a – I mean, if you looked – I mean from – from the upper part, you know, through a glass cover, and imagine you see the ghetto, you see the whole ghetto, you would see a – a life, a going on, you know, a – almost like a normal life, with – with every ingredient of – of – of – of a normal life, in a certain way. You had every – you had there – you had there everything, mostly, except for the food was problematic, but they find, in certain ways, you know, people that went out, they came. Sometimes they overlooked – not ev – not all the times, they were very harsh on bringing in food. There were sometimes that the Jews have supplied the – the Germans with cigarettes. How did they get the cigarettes? With a question mark. Th-They've got cigarettes. They –

Q: You – you observe the Jewish holidays?

A: Yes. We knew when the holidays were. Of course, the last year was mar – more

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difficult, because it was very intense, you know. But i – first couple of years we – we were able – we knew exactly where the holidays, we tried to observe them in a certain way, of course not – not too – we were not able to observe them in – in – fully, but in a certain – in a certain way we did observe them, yeah.

Q: You were s – you were starting to talk about some of the actions around

A: Yeah. There were – they were constantly, and – and I found out later that the **aktions** were – it was a – they were systematic. They used to do that not only in **[indecipherable]**, but in every single ghetto that they had. They were exactly the same day, same time, same fashion. This something we found out afterwards, because it was very organized, very meticulous. Like this day, which was also a – a incredible day, it was in '43, and that day I didn't go to work for some reason. You see, my uncle became the – the head of the **parama**, of the bread distribution, they used to bring in bread and – and they used to – considered a very honest person, you know, they – and of course, he had a few people working for him, and they would come in and – and get – the distribution of the bread became something inside – inside the ghetto. It was the – the bread brou – brought in with horses and – and platforms, and then they unloaded that, and then – so, we used to live in the same place, we used to – we moved from the place that we were, in a place where it was emptied out, and **Varniu(ph) gatvę** was this, **Varniu(ph)** three. And there were the

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distribution of the bread, and we lived in the – in this – this room there. And we were not too far from the gate. There were like two or three gates for where – why you – you would come out and thi-this gate was mostly not for the reason of – of going to work, but for the – for supplies, sometimes, when they brought into the ghetto. We're very friendly with the horse people, you know, with this – with the – with the people who had the – the horses, were strong, you know, they always were very friendly with my uncle. So, one day they – when everybody went to work, and some reason I – I – I was home and then they – doing something. I think my uncle asked me to stay with him, and d-do something, which I don't remember exactly. Suddenly, the gates opened up from the **Varniu(ph) gatvę** gates, you know, where the supply came in, and a bunch of German – German buses came in. The windows were – were blackened, you couldn't see through the window, you know? And one with the loudspeaker, start announcing that nobody should move til further advice. And right away they – oh yes, I forgot to mention, that the same day, a day before, they called – the Germans, the German **Obersturmführer** called up the – the head of the council, and told him that there is going to come in the – some German – some German supervisors are going to come in, because there might be a change of guard, and they want the police should be neatly dressed, their boots properly shining, their uniforms, whatever they were, the armbands, they should be all in

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order, because they are going to make a check on the police also. And, now going back, that the bosses came in to the ghetto with the loudspeaker, and the police were called –

Q: I'm sorry, I know this is – **[break]** – only two minutes on this tape, but I think you can tell this story.

A: Right, yeah.

Q: Soon as the plane stops.

A: Okay. My – my aunt's brother, **Chaim Levner**(ph), he was a police officer.

Nice, awful nice guy. He used to live with us **[indecipherable]** and we used to live together. So he was also one of those officers. I mean, they – they asked for the whole police force to gather, and then when they gathered, the first car that came out – the buses were behind, the first car came out, it's like a – a **Jeep**, and came out three Germans, and this was – and I was watching through the window what happened, I was inside the house. And they told to the police, they – to get in – into – in two lines, one behind the other one, three lines. And three rows **[indecipherable]**. And then they told them – they asked each of them they should mention their name. And right afterward, they told them they should sit down on the ground, suddenly. So everybody sat down, you know, in this, in this way, you know, crossing – crossing the leg. My uncle – my aunt's brother, for some reason –

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I mean, apparently he had a feeling that something is wrong there. He gets convulsions, and he was not able to sit down. So the chairman just pulled out the gun and just shot him, right there. And I was in – in – that was right in front of me, in the – in the window. And then, he was carried away, and then they took all the police, and they put them in – in the – in the first – in the first bus, everybody, including the chief, everybody. And right after that, they started the children's **aktion**. Was to take out all the children that were still left, and – the children and the elderly people. We had in our – there, where we had the bread supply, we had a – a – a basement. And we were able to bring down my – my cousin, and place her there, you know. And this was the last time that we were – that we felt that she should remain in the ghetto, because we felt that – and th-this day, they took away – they took away all the children. They went from house, to house, and they pulled out the children and elderly people, and they took them out. And of course, you know where they took them. Now, when the people came from the brigades home –

Q: I'm sorry –

End of Tape Five

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Beginning Tape Six

Q: Okay. We were talking about the children being –

A: Where – where – where – where in the ghetto, at the children's **aktion**, it was specially devised to get out all of the children from the ghetto. And in order to implement that, they had also to take out all the police because this was also – there were also children from the police officers, and – and you know how a father would react seeing his child being dragged and beaten and taken to a – to a bus and then taken away. So after this – this happened – and this was very fast, you know, they – they had a big number of – of gendarmes, of **SS** people who – who implemented this function. They went from house to house and they – they knew exactly which house had children. They had already a list. Apparently, previously they have – they have asked for the – for the composition of the people who lived in the – in each – in each house. You know, it was – so they – they had certain records, or somebody gave them the records. And they indiscriminately – I mean, they have – they have walked into each house, pulled out – pulled out the children. And most of the children were – especially the – the older ones were – their mothers were – were at work at this time. There were only a number of mothers who, when they took the children, they didn't want to go with their kids. They wouldn't let them – let them stay with the kids, so they beat them up and they just kicked them and then they

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took away the children. And the mothers were devastated. And especially now at – at six, seven o'clock, when the people start returning from – from work, and when they found out this news, it was such a outcry. It was such a tremendous outcry that – that ev – everybody was crying and everybody was – was – was devastated. It was something that some people throw themse – threw themselves on the – on the barbed wire, you know, to – to – to see whether they just can just get out and – and – and – and do something. And people – really, the mothers didn't – didn't care – care for their life anymore. They – they – they just wanted to join them, to be together with their – with their children. And the police officers – the way we – we found out later, they were – they were investigated, to find out whether there are some kids who were hidden, like we were – we hid the – my – my cousin, who was really about, at that time, about three years, three and a half years, maybe four years. And besides that, they want also to know where – because they had information at that time – It was already '44 and they knew that there were many, many, many, many freedom fighters who – who st – his – have still a communication with the ghetto, and they had apparently – it was felt that – also that the police – certain police officer have helped some, and still helping some of the – of the – of the freedom fighter. So they wanted to find out, and they shot quite a number of police officers. They shot this **Greenberg**(ph) who – who – who was very instrumental. They

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tortured him and shot him, and he would not divulge, and would not give out where the – where the hiding places were. And then the rest of those police officers, they – part of them – they returned back – back to the ghetto, became devastated and found also their – their children gone. And the – it was really – the – the feeling, I mean, was – that was so bad, you know, that the – the whole situation created an incredible loss of – of hope, you know, when you saw something like this. And this was March and it – it was already when the Russians have advanced already, substantially towards – towards the west – towards – towards – they liberated already many, many cities in – in **Russia** and they were – they were moving towards – towards **Lithuania**. And that was an episode which is – which was very, very tragic, you know, very – even difficult to – to describe this. This is – sometimes we are talking between ourselves, some survivors, and – and we exchange – exchange views. And the – the – the question is, between one survivor and the other one is, how to make people understand what we went through. I mean, this is – I mean, it's – it's – you see, you are limited in – in – in – in being able to understand it when – when somebody tells you something, you know, that's – because their – our – our minds are – are in a certain way limited. We cannot understand beyond this limit, you know. And it is, how can somebody describe certain things that like? How can somebody describe that a German **SS** man takes a

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child of a year old, takes him by his legs and smashes him with his head against – against a wall? I mean, how can – I mean, this is – it – it's – it's not even – even in the most substandard countries, I mean, it's happening, you know. They – they kill people, they massacre people, but – but I don't think it's only – I mean, it's – and it's hard to describe and it's hard to believe. Sometimes I myself, it's hard for me to believe that – that – it looks to me like a bad nightmare, rather than that it truly happened, you know. An-And – and time was going so slow, you know. The – the – the – the worst part is that although you worked so hard and you did all kind of – I didn't even mention some other work that I used to do, you know. They took us to the – to the army barracks in – sometimes and we had to clean out latrines and something else, you know, they – and some – sometimes they took some people and they just threw them into the latrine, I know, just only to – to have a little pastime for themselves, you know. So I mean, it's – it's – it's beyond – beyond description. So that's – so that's one of the reasons why we meet together with survivors sometimes, and we share experiences, we – we – we can understand it much better than – than – than explaining that to the outer world, you know, it's – it – and it's very hard to believe that a country so advanced, you know, was – was get – getting children and then **[indecipherable]** and all this. That were – that were able – that wer – came down to a level, to such a level, to – to – to be so destructive and so

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without hearts, without – so the ghetto was – th-this was a – at that – at that stage, it was already a camp, yeah. Now, next move was that we decided that we cannot keep our – my uncle decided that he cannot keep anymore his daughter there. So we made contact through a – there was a rabbi's wife, **Shuman**(ph) was her name. And I'm sure that she – she is going to surface in some of your – some of the places. She was a – an incredible lady. She was a rabbi's wife. Her husband was in **Israel** – in **Palestine** already. And she – some way he left before that. And she was matchmaking. She was out – without the – without the – the stars. She was going around and finding places to harbor children. So some – somebody told us about her and we were in – contacted her, and – and she found a place for **Sulami**(ph), which was my – my – my cousin. She was three and a half, or four years old at that time. My – my aunt laughs always, she says that I – I – I used to have an incredible appetite, you know. And I used to watch, you know – she used to give her – sometimes we were able to smuggle in tapioca. You know what is? It's a – and I used to sit quietly and watch that and pray that she should not eat the tapioca so it would be left over for me to eat. So she always – so we decided to do – how would – we would do that. At that time, we had two **SS** people in the ghetto. One name was **Fiffiger**(ph) and the other name was – what was the other name? It will come to me pretty soon. Yeah, it's [**indecipherable**] **Fiffiger**(ph) was a former teacher

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and he was – very much befriended my uncle. He was very nice. He was a **SS**, and he told the story that he was forced into the **SS**. And he – he expressed very good sentiments. So my uncle had to put his confidence – he showed in – in few cases, he showed that he was – he was helpful. And we could see that he is not one of these – one of these beasts, you know. So my uncle explained to him and – and he knew that we are having the child there, and – against all odds, and he promised my uncle that he is going to help him out. This was a remarkable – but his comrade, his friend, whose name I forgot, was just the opposite. Just the opposite. What he did once was also beyond – he encouraged people – he opened up the – he opened up th-this – anyway, first, let me finish with **Fiffiger**(ph). So they arranged that the – the – the bread was coming in twice a week with these big platforms, and then the horses with a driver were going out. So we arranged to – I gave her the sleeping pill. We put her in a bag because they – it used to come in bags. So we put her in one of the bags. And we put her under a big – so they – she can go through the – through the gates. Because the gates, they always used to stick something to find where there's sometimes hide. But it was already prearranged, you know, that apparently he – he – he did that – **Fiffiger**(ph) did that, you know. And we were able to get her out and she was given away to – to a very nice Lithuanian family. They took care – they even baptized her and made her like a part of the – and she

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spoke only Lithuanian and she was – she fortunately survived. In exchange, my uncle – the police officer who was shot, his little boy was also given out to somebody. But he was betrayed and they killed him. Apparently, this Lithuanian that took him was given – were given certain things in order to do that. They betrayed him and he was – and we found out later that he was – he was killed. So –

Q: Do you want to take a break now, or –

A: Let me just finish with the – it will come back, the name of the other guy, you know. He was a bad, bad – I should have written down. Yeah, so he – what he – he formed – it was already March, April – it was already – the ghetto already knew that it's – it's – it's still a – a – a – a little bit of hope on the horizon. So he let out the word that he is going to – that he is going to let out some people to escape. And he opened up a – a hole in – was in the fence. And needless to say, he was with a machine gun there, and he killed like 14 people there, claiming that they tried to escape. So that was **SS. Sturmführer**. [break]

Q: Another thing I think I asked you before – why don't we –

A: You want I should tell also about the escape, or –

Q: Yeah, yeah. Tell me a little bit about the ghetto becoming an official concentration camp.

A: Well, towards the end of the 1943, we s – we saw certain movements in a

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different direction. We – we felt that there is some kind of changes going to be implemented in the ghetto. And we really didn't – didn't know exactly. We felt that the guards were changed. We have – we have seen more – that was also a time when we have seen more Hungarians. They brought in Hungarians, and especially some truck drivers. One – one of them, which I knew pretty well, he was a very bad mouth, and – but he was not – not so bad. But the rest were very bad. He was **Haymushi**(ph). He was a Hungarian truck driver who – who worked very close with – with **Pilgrim**(ph) and – and **Fiffiger**(ph). He was, like, always with them. And we felt that by bringing in this nationalist, and by trying to put in more restrictions, and – and start – they started also watching more of the – all the movements and what's going on, what's happening in the ghetto. And they were very much concerned and very much were – were looking for – for some kind of supplies that the ghetto would supply, or the ghetto would produce, or the ghetto would have some contacts with – with the – with the freedom fighters. So in order to have a tighter watch, they – they have also tried to squeeze out from the police and see whether their police – to find within the police also some people who would – who would be on – on their side. They were not – were not too much able to – they had not been able to get from the – from the Jewish police, except in – in isolated case – cases, because the police was well aware of what – what was

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happening. And they – they themselves – the ghetto was the – with the council in many occasions – and many cases have tried to help. And they were – they knew also sometimes the whereabouts of – of people who – who would go out to the forest and fight and in different measures and acts of terrorism and – and blowing up railroads, and sh – cutting off supplies, and – and shooting in many cases, in back of the – of the – of the Germans. Although the Germans themselves, like – the Germans themselves, they – they – most of the time didn't dare to invade the forest, because the forest was for them, taboo. But they used for that purpose, they used Lithuanians, in many cases, to – to find out and to find out the right spots and then they would – they would be able to – to move in. We also saw the – not only by – by the change of the guard and by their behavior, we – we have felt a bigger presence in the ghetto of – of the military. Because normally, in all those years, they were – they were, most of the times, guard-guarding the ghetto from the outside and they were hardly – not too frequently, they – they used to come in and – and – and look for themselves, look in in certain aspects of the ghetto. Now, in the late '43, we have – we had a – a much bigger presence. There were also a repetition of – of people that – of requirements for – for labor force in some other – other places within **Lithuania** and – and outside of **Lithuania**, whereby they used to come and – and of course, make a selection, or they used to appeal to the – to the

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council in order to provide them with – with – with those elements who can be useful for them. And most of the times, they – they – some of the times they also tried to get some people who – who had some skills, and tried to use them in the best of their – their ability. We have seen also that factories, in the – the **verstattin**(ph) have been over swamped with – with additional work. As the front was getting closer, there were more requirements and more necessities to – for – for – for the Germans, for their supplies, and they needed the – the help and the – and the cooperation of this **verstattin**(ph), so they used to work overtime. I mean, instead ten or 12 hours, they used to work 14 or 15 hours, you know. And they also implemented some shifts in that time. The – the underground movement grew faster and faster. They – they had now much better opportunities because the Lithuanians by themselves also were not dumb. They saw that the tide is changing. So they, in many cases, they tried to befriend, and – and to be a little bit more helpful. Although, the – the same orders still persisted that if they catch somebody that they would have a [**indecipherable**]. But we have seen that they – they were more aggressive in – in hiding people and in helping and – and in trying to make up for the – for the damages that they have done before. When the – in 1944, after the – after the children's **aktion**, and after we have – we have brought out our – my cousin from – from the ghetto, I myself started thinking of terms of – of getting

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away. I was in contact in two cases, in two ca –

Q: I have to ask you to say that again because of the airplane. What are you going to tell me about now? Are you going to tell me about your escape?

A: Mm-hm. The guards, and – and more frequently coming into the – to the – to the ghetto. I didn't see, really a – I mean, they were as brutal as they used to be because this – especially the – the – the foreigners – the Hungarians, they were not – they were not good people, you know that – especially there. They were – they were as brutal as they are, maybe some – some – some more than – than the others in – in many, many occasions. This **[indecipherable]** the truck driver, I mean, he was **[indecipherable]** that time when I – I mentioned about letting – deceiving the people and telling them they can escape and so forth and so on, because people have started feeling there, the air has changed, in the sense that the front was getting closer and closer. And the question was when and how fast. At the same time, they started getting preparations for – for – to liquidate the ghetto. Apparently this was mentioned in – in a – in few occasions that – that pretty soon they have already orders in place in order to eliminate the ghetto, and to – and to take out all those remains of the – of the people. At that time, I think – I'm – I'm sure that in the ghetto were not left over more than four or 5,000 people, maybe now – maybe now from 33,000 that originally – so what they did is also – when – when they – when

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they used to – when the ghetto became smaller – small-smaller in – in – in population, they also start cutting off smaller in territory. What they did is, where we had the **Varniu**(ph) **gatvę** where the – with the – with the **[indecipherable]** was the gate for the supplies, there was a – a – a number of houses that one day they came in and they took a – a – a bunch of people, workers, and they didn't remove the fence that was the original fence. What they did is, they put in another fence, cutting off, like, four or five blocks from the – from the original one. So it became like a ghetto within a ghetto, you know. This was, in a certain way, to my personal advantage, you know, because – and maybe some others, which I – I – I do – I don't know. I can speak for myself on it. What they did is, actually by – by putting a new fence and putting guards – putting guards around this fence, they have diminished the guards from the overall fence, which was before, even without taking off. So, what happened was that, when we used to go to work, we decided – I have a – had a – we were five – five people that we decided to – to flee the camp. We saw that – already that the time is running out. I spoke to – three times to one friend of mine that was in the – was in the – in the partisans. And he told me that whenever I want to join them I should – I should contact somebody, and – in order to join them. The only thing is, after that I tried to get the – the other – th-the contact man and he was already gone, also. So I went to my – where my uncle was and I told him, look, I

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think that it's no – no reason for me to remain here. I mean, it's – we're – we're close. We're very close to the end. I mean, it's – they are going – one of these days, we are going to get up and we're going to find ourselves surrounded by – by trucks and they are – they are just going to take us, and – and – and ta-take us out and – and take us to camps, or take us somewhere else, or – or – or take us to the **Ninth Fort**. So my uncle, who was very conservative always – and he really was very close to me, was – was like – like a father to me, you know. And th-this was maybe one of reasons that – that I have not left the place sooner. And especially my grandmother, she was crazy about me, you know, she [**indecipherable**] that time when I saved her, you know, she – she would not – and we knew that she – she – also – also survived, you know, the – the children's **aktion** that time also when – because she was with a child inside, but her, we couldn't get – get her out, because well, it would be too – too difficult, you know. A child is something that – el-else. So what – so my uncle came to the conclusion, say that's fine and gave me his blessing, I mean, it – and I deciding to – now, how are we going to do it? So I – I devised a plan, in other word, the houses which were behind the first – the general fence, a few houses still left. They have – normally, in many cases they would explode some of the houses. They would put in some dynamite and explode it. Here, they – they have – and – and they did it later on with the r – with the – with

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the rest of the ghetto. So I had a – I had three more people with me – three – four. There was one – one guy that was himself from **Poland** and for – some way he was stuck in – in – in **Kovno**, and never was able to get out. And then it was the nephew of – the nephew of my aunt, who is now in **Charlotte, North Carolina**. And then the other one was a guy that used to – frequently to come to our house. And then it was the other fellow that worked also with – was a nephew of somebody who worked with my – with my uncle. So, then this guy knew – supposedly he knew the road, how to – I mean, where to go in order to get to the forest.

Q: You know what –

A: The forest was – what – yeah, okay.

Q: – I have to stop you, sir. The reason is, I think that people –

A: Okay. I'll make that sh-short, you know. Okay. We were five, we have accumulated some supplies in one of the houses. And one day when we came back from work, we have – we – we just defected from the – from – from the group, which was large group, when we came back from work. And we went into this house and then we watched the out guard – the outside guard – we had also special pliers to cut – to cut the wire. We have – wait til the night. On that third day, we cut through – in our supplies what we had was water, sugar, and bread. We – we watched – we timed the guards that was walking, we cut through the wires, and we

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just came out. And we – it was nighttime and we were not able to go too far because night – nighttime, it was – it was a – it was very dangerous to go, because you're able – I mean, they would stop you and then right away there, you would be finished. So we hid in a – in a – next to a house in the garden, where it was dense bushes and we stayed there for – for a – for the night. And then early morning, we left and we went towards the woods – towards the woods which was **Janava**. That was a – a place where there were al – there already some partisans were – were working – were working in – in the – in the – in the exploding some supplies – some supplies for the Germans and so on. Okay. We had to go through to a – through a main highway. And when we walked, we walked like in one behind the other one. So when we reached the highway – and this was during the daytime already, a guy with a – with a bicycle and was dressed in – in civilian but with a rifle, was there waiting for us. And when we approached him, I mean, he took off the rifle and he said, your documents. Okay. We start running in different directions. This was outside the city, you know, it was a big field of potatoes and – and corn. So –

Q: Stop.

End of Tape Six

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Beginning Tape Seven

A: The details, I have no knowledge of the details.

Q: Okay.

Q: I know certain – certain ca – was in the camp, you know, but there is nothing that I was able personally to – personally to – to verify, you know. So – okay. So we – we start, and this guy took off his rifle and started shooting one of the five. I mean, he hid and then I found out later that they killed him. Four of us, we dispersed and I ran in one direction to the cornfield. And I saw some – it was really late during the day and I – I – I –

Q: You know something?

A: Yeah?

Q: I hate to ask you to do this, but I'm actually – I'm concerned because this is on two tapes. **[break]**

A: Towards the beginning of '44, we have seen with a – with a change also, the status of the ghetto – from the ghetto to a concentration camp. We felt a new – a new arrangements and – and some things – certain things – certain changes which we – it was not too hard for us to figure out. We saw that the handwriting on the wall. We saw that everything what's happening with the Russian army, the victorious expelling, pushing the Germans towards – towards the – towards the

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west. And we felt also that there is time for – for me and for some friends to – to get out and get out as soon as possible because every – every day was a matter that – we knew exactly that – what our fate was going to be. So truthfully, we didn't have too much to risk because one way or the other way, I mean, we would – we would not be able to survive. So I went to see my uncle and I told him that – and my grandmother, I told them that I'm – I – I'm ready, with – with my other fellow – fellow friends to – to get out, and to get out as fast. So my uncle I – my uncle also gave me a – he had like a little golden coin and he gave this to me and he said, look, in case of necessity or something, I mean, you – he – he – he had like three of them, you know, so he was hiding that always in – somewhere. So when – soon I got together with my – with my friends and when we went to work, coming back we just evaded the guards and we came into one of the houses that we marked for – for our shelter in – in – in between, in order to be able to – to plan our – our escape. The – one of my friends was much younger than us, a couple of years, and he was a short one, and we used him as the outlook. So he used to look and to watch. And he was the one that timed the steps of the – of the guard on the outside of the fence, and then came to the conclusion. He gave us the signal, we came out, we cut through the wires and that was nighttime. And we just slipped out, all of us. Because we – really the security was behind us in the – in the smaller ghetto where

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there was double-rolled barbed wire. This was all – this was a old fence which they have never tried to repair because they were – there was – the ghetto was in the ghetto, you know. Now, when we had to – we slept over there in a – in a – in a garden, a dense garden. And in the morning we start going. But we left a distance between ourselves. Rather than walking in a group, we walked, like, one by one, some meters, one behind the other one. When we came through a – through a – with a bo – to a place where we had to cross the highway, there was one person with a – with a bicycle, and a rifle on his shoulder, a Lithuanian. And suddenly he came out and approached us, say, stop, documents. Raise your hands. So when he did that, we start running in different directions. It was only one person and we knew that he might shoot one but he cannot shoot everybody, you know. Besides that, his aim was not too good because I felt – when I run, I felt like, a couple bullets passing me and then I don't know. I – I – I really ran like never in my life, and then I threw myself in the cornfield. I know also that later on when I was laying there for quite a while, I know that they – they had some – some people with horses try to locate somebody, and I hoped that they are not going to find anybody. But I, during nighttime I walked about additional half a mile and I saw ble – flickering lights. And I say to myself, without these – would that be headquarter – would – would that be quarters for the Germans or some barracks or something? Then I stepped

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away and I found myself close to a small, small woods. And there I slept over the night. It was really – it was a little bit cold nighttime, but I covered myself with leaves and some other things. And there was a little – a little – I wouldn't say a river, but it was little place with – with water. And then I – I was hiding behind the bushes. In the morning, I heard some voices in Russian, and I – I watched that, and I saw that there – there, a woman came and she – apparently two friends, but one stayed with a – with a metal thing, you know, what they – they put here – put in cloth. And she started washing right there in this – where there was li – this was not even like a river, but it was a place that I remember that I had drunk water. I had my hat, so with my hat I used to take and – and – and drink the water. Because food was nothing. I – I used to collect some – some berries, you know, from wild berries, and this was my food. So I was desperate. I was very hungry and this woman was washing and I said to myself, let me – let me approach her. And I spoke perfect Russian, of course. So I came out. I said, look, I'm – I'm escapee, and like you should help me with some food. So I was not sure whether she was going to go – first of all, I didn't know. I asked her what was there in this – in this place, where I saw the flickering lights in the night. And she said, no, that's a camp, a civilian ca-camp for civilian Russians. An intern camp for civilian Russians. But then she told me that she is going to come back and bring me some food. And I – I thought to

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myself, I prayed, I said, or she is going to bring me food, or she is going to bring me a German who is going to – to kill me? About 15 minutes later she comes back with a bottle of milk and a piece of **spec(ph)** – you know, that's – that's from – it's like meat, fat meat, you know – and a piece of bread. And then I started talking to her and she said to me that she got scared when she saw me, because I looked like I'm an old, you know, the – and I explained to her that I'm a refugee, and so forth. And so she said to me, look, we have in our camp two Russian prisoners who – who fled, and who are hiding in our – in this – in this camp. And they also are going to – they are planning to go to join the – the freedom fighters, the partisans. And where they are going? They are going to **Janava, Janava, Belder(ph)**, that used to be **Janava**, the forest of **Janava**, which was not too far away from there. And this guy **Scheiker(ph)**, that was with me, he – he – he was leaving us, and he told us, and he explained to me, because he himself was from **Janava**, and he told us – he gave me certain – certain parameters. But now, I mean, he was – he was gone, so I had to do that myself. So then, in the – in the evening, sh-sh – the two Russians came over. They had knives for themselves, and they asked me a few questions, and they wanted to verify whether I am legit and I shouldn't be – I shouldn't be some – the bay – betray them. And then the next morning, early in the morning, we went to the woods, we approached them, and one of them had apparently a contact, or he knew

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exactly a certain spot. First of all, th-the Russian prisoners were not treated very friendly by the Russians, because **Stalin's** – **Stalin's** view was that the Russians should never fell in a prisoner life, I mean, he should give his life for the country. But of course, this – that was not the case. So he took us to the forms – forest at one point and he – then we met about three or four more guys there. They were from the – from – apparently also, they were former Russian prisoners. And they had already a plan, a top – topographic plan, and they had all rolls. So they said that they have received some supplies from – from parachutes that they – and they had some assignment to watch and to see whether some German forces are going – if they are going to be close by, they have to communicate and they have to try to do certain sabotage – sabotage work. We spent about, I would say, maybe about close to 20 days moving around from one spot to the other one, because we didn't want to stay in one spot. And on few occasions – I was not trained, I didn't – I didn't know anything about – about ammunition or anything. They have done, basically, the work. And the – in – in different cases, I was the look out. They used me to be the look out. They had some – some light arms and knives basically, and they had some back packs with – with ammunition. We spent, I would say, about four weeks. And one – one day, we heard a movement. We put our ears – normally, what we used to do is, we used to put our ears to the grounds, so we can detect – that's a way of

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detect whether there is some heavy movements. And here we detected that some – based on our imaginations, some tanks. And now we saw about three or four German tanks rolling not too far away, you know. And then about a couple hours later, we heard some shootings, and an exchange of fire. And this whole neighborhood vicinity became like a – like a – like a military, I mean, hell. Because bullets and flying out the – in the shrubs, and saw burning – burning bushes and all this, you know. It was an incredible, incredible exchange of fire. Then, it lasted for about an hour, an hour and a half, and it looked to me that it lasted forever, you know. Because we found ourselves in the middle and we said to ourselves, now we are going to be killed by – by friendly – by friendly – our friendly power – gun power. Suddenly, it quietened down. It was quiet like nothing – I mean, like – like nothing ever – anything happened, you know. And I say to the – to one of Russians, I say, what – what would that be? I mean it's – it's too quiet, I mean, we got used already to the – to the – to the – to the incredible sound of – of – of explosions, you know. And then suddenly we heard again, we put – the Russian put his – he put his ear on the ground. He said, something is happening. It's – it's quite apparently, but something is happening. And, like 45 minutes later, we heard – we heard some movement of, like, troops. Not too many. And then we saw the first Russians approaching us. And the first question was – the first question was, have you seen

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some tanks? I sort of, yeah, we saw quite a few hours ago. And he said, no, these tanks already finished. Have you seen some other tanks? And we say, no. Right away it was – I was amazed, you know, because right away I – I was approached by – by one of the lieutenants. I think it was a captain, not a lieutenant – captain, because he had three stars, yeah. It was a captain, and he – he actually told me that – he looked at me and looked at me and says, are you Jewish? I say yes. So am I, he said. Okay, we embraced each other and he – right away what he did is, he told us – he said, look, this is the front line, and the line might change, because we don't know what – what – what – what is ha – what can – what is going to happen a few kilometers from here. My advice is, and what I want to see you, is to the **till**. **Till** is towards the back, towards the **[indecipherable]**, you know, towards the back, you know. And right away, he called a – a – a soldier and he said, take these guys and take them over. And – and in meantime, we was already approaching some **Jeeps** and some – some other – some other military units. And he told us to move as far as possible towards the back. He said, you went through already, it's sufficient. I mean, it's – and th-this was the – this was actually the – the – the way that we – so happy. I mean, the first time we felt like – felt like liberated, you know. And then he asked me – another guy that he referred me to ask me some question. He said me whether I want to join the army, or I want to do. I said, no, no, first what I want to

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do is, I want to go – I want to see – because my question was, how soon are they going to liberate **Kaunas**? He said, that might take still a few days or – or it might still take some – some time. So we were with the army for about – I think about ten or 15 days til they have to [indecipherable] **Kaunas** and to liberate it. I went right away to the – to the – to the ghetto. The ghetto was exploded. Everything, all the houses were exploded. They have – some people came out from the hiding in some places. Some people came out from hiding. I went to this place where we were hiding and we had some photographs and I found some photographs. But supplies and other things that we had in – in our – in our house, and in the ground was nothing. It was like, everything burned. And right away I went to – to **Kaunas**. This was **Slobodka**. I went to **Kaunas**, I got myself – right away I met with this officer, that he told me that he is going to – he is – I mean, that he is going to be coming to **Kaunas**, and he gave me a number where I can – I can reach him. And he told me that if I have some – some kind of desire of some – something. I said, yeah, I would like to have – I have some – I have some relatives here, and I would like to see whether I can find them. Where – where are there – I – I am sure – I felt they were very optimistic. I said maybe there are some relatives that I have. And I start floundering around for quite a few days. And then I found a family, that we were together in the ghetto and then later, they went to Canada. But I used to send them

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packages when I was in there – when – just a minute – that I send them packages after, when I – when I – when I was in the army. They – I helped them to find a place – a living place because the – the city was – was devastated, you know. There – there was not too many – too big fights in the city, but it was many have escaped and left behind themselves apartments with furniture, and you know, like – the same way like when the – when the – when the Germans came in. So right away I found a – a friend of mine, who told me that if I would like to serve – to serve in the – in the Russian army because, due to the fact that I have finished gymnasium, and I speak the – I speak Lithuanian, German, and – an-and Russian, so I would be a good prospect. He se – he told me that there is coming a – a group of – a – a group of people to – of military men to take some – to take – to – to – they are looking for some inper – interpreter. They need very badly people who speak Lithuanian and Russian. Basically German is not, at this point, is not important, but it's going to become important later. And at the same time, they promulgated a law that all these people from this and this year, they are going to be – they are going to be from 1924, 1925, 1926, they are going to be taken to the army – to the regular army. And I say to myself, I would rather serve in a specialty unit than – than to wait and then be recruited to the army. They have like a place where they called **wayan(ph)** **komat(ph)**. This is a – a – a military place, whereby they check out new – they

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check out prospective soldiers, you know, health-wise and whether they have **TB** because there were many with – with **TB**, you know, from those that survived. So I actually signed up for this – for this unit. I remember a younger captain came in and – and interviewed me and he was satisfied. And then what he told me that he is going to recruit me and I will have to go through a short preparation – military preparation of about six weeks. And I agreed. In meantime, he told me I can – I can stay there and he gave me a official paper where I can go and find myself a – a – a apartment. So I found my relatives, those I mentioned, and I found myself not too far away where I used to live before, on the same [**indecipherable**] on same main street. I got myself a nice apartment and my relatives were very happy. They had two children and – and myself and I told them, look, I am going to be just here, and only temporary, and I am – I am going to be leaving. And also, was very interesting walking on the – when I got myself a bicycle an-and riding on the bike, I met a very good friend of mine, this **Harmutz**(ph), who was the – the head of the **ORT**. He wasn't in the ghetto and he was involved in the partisans. And he esca – I mean, he joined in also in the army but in the civilian department. They made him a – like a commissar, or something, in the civilian department because he – he had excellent contacts in the – with some high-ranking people. So I met with him and it was incredible, incredible meeting, you know, to – in – in middle of – of – of nowhere

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or something like, you know, in the middle of the city, to meet somebody that was such a close friend of mine. Then, from there, I – I was – I was sent to a – to a – to a training camp, and in about six weeks they send me to the first mission. I mean, I was recruited, got the uniform, got my – they sent me within **Lithuania**, in certain places to – to be attached to the – there was also – you see, there was also a Lithuanian brigade under the Commander **Vilinski**(ph), who was – which was formed right when the war – in the beginning of the war. Very brave. Many of those people died in – in deep **Russia**, you know, and it was incredible, really. But I didn't – I joined the regular ar-army, which I – I said that is a policing force, which is called the – it was the 33rd regiment of the [indecipherable] **NKVD**, which was the border police, attached to the **NKVD**. After the training and after they send me to **Lithuania**, they send me to a place, to **Liepāja**, which was **Courland**, in – that was in **Latvia**. And there – there we had big – a big fight because there were – there were the – I don't know whether you heard about the **Vlasovtsy**. That is a General **Vlasov**, a Ukrainian who joined the Germans and he created a Ukrainian – Ukrainian battalion. Alway – almost the army, who fought with the Germans against the Russians, against their own people. So there were entrenched the – a group of – of those people, and they fought tooth and nail because they knew that if they are going to be captured, they are going to be killed [indecipherable]. They

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wouldn't take them as prisoners. And there I had my – my first accident. I was in a **Jeep** with a – with a captain, and – and a driver, and there was a big shelling, and it hit the **Jeep**, and I was just knocked out fro-from the **Jeep**, and I found myself later in the hospital. Thanks God I had only two broken ribs and – and small – small contusions and some – some other things, you know. But the captain who was sitting next to me was killed, a Russian captain. And then from there, I – they sent me after I – took me about 14, 15 days to – to be back on my feet – they – they send me to **Germany**, was to ca – and participate in – in liberating the City of **Königsburg**, which was very interesting. And from there, they came a order to – after a while, came an order – a special order, that our regiment was going to be sent entirely to the [indecipherable] Islands, to the Japanese front. And I was the only one that got the assignment to join **Chuikov's** army in the direction of **Berlin**. And this was – and I feel that this was because the – the colonel that was in charge, **Venakurov**(ph), I think it was, Jewish. And I – I told him once, I said, look – I pleaded with him, I told him, look, I – if you are going to send me to the [indecipherable] Islands, I am going to be of no use, and I am in the mood, you know, to – to take vengeance for – for my people, and I – I think my place wil – should be on the German front rather than on the – on the Japanese front. So next day, I – I found a – a – it's called **kommandi**(ph) **rofka**(ph). That means my

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assignment to travel. And this is when I traveled through **Warsaw**. I remember traveling through **Warsaw** bridge, it took us maybe an hour to pass this bridge, because the bridge was completely damaged and the train was going slowly through that. And then there I joined the – I joined **Chuikov's** forces. And this was incredible experience, incredible experience. Then we marched, I mean we went – when we – we continued to Berlin and we also liberated a concentration camp of **Sachsenhausen**. And we had in our – in our power, most of the – of the guards from the concentration camp of **Sachsenhausen**. Now the –

Q: Tell me a little bit more about what you saw when you got to **Sachsenhausen**.

A: What we saw was – was – was terrible, terrible things. I mean the – the face of the – there were few people – I mean, not too many people. I would say a few hundred people. Maybe it were – maybe more than that, maybe around thousand people that were – were liberated. Most of them we found many, many, ravines with – with human bodies, you know, skeletons. And – and it was – it was a terrible, a terrible, terrible view, you know, to see that, see what actually – there were – and this – in **Sachsenhausen**, there were not only Jews, there were also many, many from other different nationalities. There were Russian prisoners, there were – there were **Polaks**, and there were some not – non-Jewish people also. We have – we were successful because they – they actually – they wanted to – the – the

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guards actually threw away their weapons, and they wanted to – they – they actually surrendered. The – the fight was – it was not a big fight because they – they felt that – that it's over and although there were **SS**, they were pure **SS**. They were not the **Wehrmacht**. And they were all apprehended, most of them. The – the head of the camp, I mean, the – the commander of the camp and – and the – the more important people were – they – they escaped. We would spend there a short time. There was also a very big stench, you know, because there was – this camp was – was devastated, you know. They have committed so many atrocities, apparently they wanted to move the people, to move out – to move out a little bit further, because, you know, **Sachsenhausen** is not far from **Berlin**. It's like 50 kilometers from Berlin. They –

Q: We're going to change the tape? No.

A: So they – they have decided, and it was a – a captain that was – dec-decided that they, rather than – they rather surrender than – than – than keep up fighting. The – the people were – I mean, they were like, stunned when we came in. They – they – they didn't know. They – they thought we were angels. We were – we were – we came down from heaven, you know. They – they – they have never, never believed that they are going to be able to survive, you know, because they – because they were – that was a German camp. It was not – there are many Germans, also,

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German Jews. It was a swift liberation on this – this camp was remarkable. And then, through the guards, we found out many, many, many details in their – I mean, in – in questioning them. We brought them to – those people, we brought them to our – to our headquarters.

Q: Now I know we have to change –

A: Yeah.

End of Tape Seven

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Beginning Tape Eight

A: – everything what they have left behind them. So they – I remember that, yeah.

That is the –

Q: [**indecipherable**] and that's when they [**indecipherable**] that miraculous escape.

A number of people actually – you – you were talking about this earlier, weren't you?

A: About the escape from –

Q: From the **Ninth Fort**. And one other question; were you – when you went back to **Kovno**, were you with the Red Army at that point?

A: Yeah.

Q: So you were part of the Red Army that liberated **Kovno**.

A: I was not part of the army. I was with the army, but I was still not – I was still not a – a soldier. I was still –

Q: But you went in when they liberated **Kovno**?

A: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

Q: Okay.

A: But I – I –

Q: I'll let you finish where you were before.

A: Yeah, so **Sachsenhausen**, we had – we were successful in –

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Q: I'm sorry [**indecipherable**] lean back.

A: Yeah, we were successful and – in getting most of the guards with us. Of course, I wouldn't say all of them, but most. And we held them in [**indecipherable**] which was east – in east **Berlin**, in **ern(ph) Schnellstrasse**, for the purposes of a investigation. At that time, the colonel that was the head of my superior officer, he wanted to make a small process, similar to the **Nuremberg** process. And that was one of the reasons why we went twice to **Nuremberg**, before consultations. But then I – truthfully, I don't know what happened afterwards, you know, because he was called to – he was called to **Moscow**, to meet with **Molotov**, for a certain – for – for certain reasons, and fortunately for me, I – I was not able to see him when he came back, because I was not in the Russian army any more when – when he came back. Now, during the investigations, we have – we have had – very spontaneously they – the guards have cooperated. They gave us many details, and they gave us as much information as they – as they were able to. And there was a case within this investigation, where we had a lieutenant that broke down, because the investigation, we used to – the – we used to conduct them between one and four o'clock in the morning. And this was – precisely this was done in this fashion, because that was the – the way the – the **KGB**, and the **NKVD** used to – used to conduct themselves, because they feel that in this they're under – under – under – in – in a silent

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ambience, and with – with – with some heavy lights focused on the – on the – on the prisoner, and the heavy questioning, they – they had no choice but they had to – to spill out all the information that they had. So we had this case with the lieutenant who – who broke down, and he jumped through – broke the window, jumped down and – and fell on top of a picket fence. And we thought that he – he wanted to commit suicide, you know, but fortunately for him, he – he survived, and he was able then later to complete – complete the investigation and give us the additional information that we were looking for. I mean, especially so longer it was, we were preparing for a process, we needed more exact information about th-the conditions, and about the brutalities they have committed, and their approach to the – to the prisoners with their – their food rationing, their – their – the – the composition of the – of the people in the – in the – in the – in the camp, and the – and so many details that were – everything were – we had – everything was written down, and – and ready, almost, for a – for a process.

Q: Okay, you were – you went to **Berlin**. You were part of the li – the liberating force of **Berlin**, were you not?

A: Yes, we – we – we were part of the liber – became about **SS** – as you know, the **Berlin** was the last stronghold of **Hitler** and his – and his followers. He, of course, went with her, and now he – I mean the – he's so ready that it's – it's over, it's

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finished. The 1,000 year **Reich** is coming to the end. And he gathered, of course, his main advisors, and they – they have apparently decided to – to throw the last – the last **kampf**. Not **mein kampf**, but the last **kampf**, the last battle, to see – they – they wanted – they were very much disappointed to fell into the ru – in the Russian hands. They felt much more comfortable if they would have fallen into the French, British, or American – they – their desire was to – to be in the American hands, but unfortunately for them, and fortunately – and unfortunately for some Russians also – as you know, **Eisenhower** stopped to the **Elbe**, and he gave orders just to stop there, not to go ahead. It was a tactical – I – it was – it was a – a good decision in one way, and a bad decision in a si – in the other way, because this what prompted for what happened afterwards, because **Berlin** was taken by the Russians. The Russians were very happy, because to them, you see, the Americans, they are more geared for – for individuals. The Russians are more geared for masses. The individuals don't count, you know, and they didn't count in the **Soviet Union**. So they fell to – to sacrifice 50,000 more of troops couldn't make a difference, you know. **Eisenhower** thought in different terms. He thought, let the Russians take it. Why should we sacrifice our people? And – and this was – it was a smart decision, as I mentioned, in the sense that not – not to sacrifice more – more **G.I.s**.

Q: Right. So you went in.

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A: But – yeah, so we went in, and th-ther – **Berlin** was taken, as you know, by the **shtrafniki**. There were a few battalions of th – of – of prisoners, and deserters, and they were given a opportunity to get in the fight of **Berlin**, and get amnesty for the life – I mean, if they – if they survive. And this was a tremendous battle, you know, because **Hitler** threw all the – all his reserves, and all those who were faithful to him, especially a – a big force of **Hitlerjugend**. That was the – the young **Hitler** army. The battle was over pretty soon. The – the resistance was not as strong as the Russians had thought it's going to be, and the city fell. The Russians have concentrated the east – east side of **Berlin**, and we have – we – we were assigned – we were coming in, we were assigned to go to the **Reichs Chancellery**, which was the – which was the hideout of **Hitler**, and his followers, his closest followers. We have found the **Reichs Chancellery** with a – with a bomb, which penetrated through the roof, and have never exploded. And the inside, it was almost everything in – in pretty – pretty good condition, except for the – for the big hole that opened up from a – now, we found also the – the bunker of **Hitler**, which was incredible, incredible art work, in the sense of – of – of – of security, providing security for – for a tyrant like – like **Hitler** and his – his people. We found doors, steel doors, which like three foot of thickness of the door. We found the – the – from **beton** – from – from concrete, about 10 foot of concrete thickness, you know, walls, and –

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and to the point where we found quite a lot of documents. And basically we had the orders, and we found also traces of **Eva Braun** and **Hitler**, which we feel that this was their – th-their – their ashes. That was never confirmed, because the Russians have not – were not interested in, for some reason, to publicize that, and they have cleaned out the place, as soon after we found that. But most of the documents, in the documentary, we have turned over to the – to the Americans, who used to come with **Studebakers**, and take them away, because for some – some –

Q: [indecipherable]

A: – they was [indecipherable] from their archives. What kind of documents, I really don't know, because I – I myself have not had a – a chance to – had we known that there were valuable documents, because they were – they were in the ru – the fact that they were in the **Reichs Chancellery**, and the fact that they were in well – well-guarded, and well preserved, was that – that they are – they had – and I'm sure that there were – they're somewhere stashed away, or they're now still in – in – in separate places in – in **United States**. Because based what Officer **Schwartz**(ph) told me – not officer, he was a sergeant, whom I met and who was the one that used to come with the – with the – with the trucks, and we used to help the – our soldiers used to help to pack them. Now, right after that, we –

Q: One – one more question. Where did you find these ashes, the re – the supposed

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remains –

A: They were – they were in the – in the courtyard. Was a big courtyard surrounding the **Reichs Chancellery**, and there was a big fence around that. And we found that in – in – in one spot, it was like – it was not on the ground, it was on – on – on top of the ground.

Q: How did you – who told you that that's what it was?

A: We found out about that. I mean, it's a – we were – it's presumably that they – they were the ashes from – from **Hitler**.

Q: Just a pile of ashes?

A: Because for some – pile of ashes, you know, and there were some – also some traces of bones, and some other things. We knew they're human – they're human remains, but we didn't – of course, we didn't know that – but then later we found out that this – this was – and it came to – we came to the conclusion.

Although, the Russians felt that they – I had a – nobody knows their reasonings. Rather than come out publicly – publicly and say look, why don't we find it, they really didn't – were not very much interested in the details. They felt that – for some reason they have a – they had a different attitude. They would rather – rather than start researching documents, they would rather send people to – to the gulag. Send Nazis to the gulag, imprison them. Have a short trial without any – any –

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without any benefits for those – for the prisoners, and – and just tr-transport them. That was their aim, they were so fed up and – and so bitter, that they – they – the – the Germans, for them, were like – I mean, they – they – they just were not able to stand them at all, you know. And th-then there's – and there's – we understand the reason for that, you know. So, right there in **[indecipherable]** we – we were living **[indecipherable]** in the compound, in there, where our main offices were. Then from – next to us was a – a – was a store from a – a place where some German Jews had a – there were furs. They had – they – they made furs. And I've befriended them. The name was **Helmut(ph) Selten(ph)**, and his brother, and then his wife. He married a – a German woman, whose husband –

Q: Excuse me, I'm sorry, I've got an audio problem. **[break]** I – I just want to understand one thing. When you were with the Russian army, you served primarily as an interpreter?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Did you – you didn't do shooting or anything?

A: No, in this – in this case, oh yes, in the beginning, yes, of course. That was – we – we did – we did that, we did shooting, you know.

Q: You?

A: Of course, yeah. We did. But – **[interruption]** Especially in **Lithuania**, when

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we were in **Lithuania**, we – the main – main work was persecution of – of criminals, and – [interruption] In – in **Berlin**, I did more in – more – more work as interpreter, because I was mostly assigned to this – to the coroner, whereby when I was in **Lithuania**, I didn't have a – a special assignee – assignment, you know, I was mostly as – we moved, especially when we took [indecipherable], I mean, I was in the – in – it was part of the – of the training, but it was not the training, it was already in the battlefield.

Q: So do you – you were starting to tell me that you met this –

A: So, I met **Helmut(ph) Selten(ph)**, and I befriended him, and I explained to him that I have relatives in **Cuba**. We became very friendly, and I used to go to his house, and beside that, I – I was very close to – to the [indecipherable] **Baruck(ph)** was his name. He was a Ukrainian, and he – he was a colonel. And I used to ha – I had with him a very good relationship. He had all his family with him in **Berlin**. And like most of the Russians, he was interested in – in some material help, you know. So we – what we used to – my assignment was to bring in – our assignment was to bring in some people from the – from the – that used to belong to the Nazi party, or that used to be involved some way in the – in – in some criminal activities or something. And – and we used to get him as – as informers. So we have them on our list, we had a – one of the informers was a – had a gramophone factory. They're

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the one who had the slaughterhouse. One has a – like a other type of factory, I don't remember what was. So what – I used to have a motorcycle, with a side one. So those people were redeemed in a certain way. There was al-always the sword of **Damocles** was hanging over their – over their neck, you know. But they were, in a certain way, so long they were able to form, and to give all the information about some more bigger fish, you know. So once a week we used to – they used to come to our compou – to our compound – I mean – and they used to meet with the – with the – used to come very discreetly. We had a special entrance for them. And they used to give all – all kind of information, you know. So, when I used to – I used to go to meet them from time to time, to visit them, they used to fill up my side, you know, from the motorcycle, like with all kind of meats, and everything, and they used to take that – there used to be **Alexanderplatz**(ph), which was a – a – a place, a very special place for black market, and – and for all kind of illegal activities, you know. Used to take that over there, and they used to sell it, and then bring the money to – to – to the commander, and you know, to the – and turned it over to him. He used to give me something like a [**indecipherable**] and I was very, very happy, you know. And then, when I used to go with the gramophone factory, used to be loaded with gramophones, you know. They – the Germans, I mean they – they had a – a very interesting thing, it's when they – when – when they capitulated, I

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mean, that was it. They wouldn't get involved in the – in the – in terrorist or some other activities, that was it. In the meantime, I used to go with – with Colonel **Baruck**(ph). He – he was very friendly with the chief of police from – from **Berlin**, and they used to go hunting together, and I was with them, always. So one day, I – I became friendly also with the chief of police, and I told him I – I say, I'm involved in – in this type of activities where sometimes I have to go from one sector – now that **Berlin** is divided four sector; the French, the British, the Russian, and the – and the American. I says, and I am sometimes in jeopardy, so I need a – a **ausweis** – I – a card, as a German. He hesitated, but then he gave it to me, you know. And I say, don't mention it to anybody, because this is due to my work, you know. So, when I met with **Helmut**(ph) **Selten**(ph), and I disclosed him that I eventually want to – I have relatives in **Cuba**, and I'd like to get out, because pretty soon they're going to demobilize me and send me back to **Lithuania**, which was – I didn't have any desire to go back to **Lithuania**. So we start actively pursuing, I mean, how to – what – what – what to do, how to – so one day he comes for – to me, very happy, and he says, listen, I mean, there is a Joint – the Joint Distribution Center in – in **West Berlin**, in the American sector. Why don't we go over there? And I used to wear sometimes, civilian clothes also, because due to my work, I mean, I used to have to be camouflaged, you know, so I wore more civilian than – than military. So

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I say, okay, let's – let's move. So, we took the **U-Bahn**, you know, the metro? And we went to – I think it was in – in **Charlottenburg**. So, we came into the Joint Distribution, and there is a American colonel, and I say, look, I'm a – a Russian and Jewish officer in the Russian army, and I would like to – you should help me to flee, and I – I have my relatives in **Cuba**, and I – I just would like to get away, because – I explained to him, I say, I'm going to be very openly where you – open with you, I am truthfully – I mean, it's – I – they – I have no use any more to be here. I mean, I have already accomplished what I felt to accomplish. Now I will – what I want is to – to – to get to my family, I mean, because I am by myself. They're going to send me back to – he said, look, we're sorry, but we cannot do anything, because we have a very good relationship with the Russian, they're our allies, and we cannot create a – a – a – a international conflict. I say, international **[indecipherable]**. So I almost **[indecipherable]** because I saw here that my – my opportunity to – to – to – to get out, and I thought, they're going to – like, I'm going to declare myself like a – a – a refugee, and then that's it. So he says – he calls on his secretary. He said, look, you know where your relatives are in **Cuba**, what's their name? And I say, yes, I have their name. Do you – do you know where they are? I say, no, they're in **Havana**. Do you have a address? I give to her address. So I say, why don't you send – we are going to send a telegram. We're going to send

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that to the Jewish community center in **Havana**, to make the story short. And I thought, I mean, this is a – I mean, he just wanted to get rid of me, and then he – he – he just [**indecipherable**]. Exactly 20 days later, **Helmut**(ph) calls me and says, hey. He says, I have a letter from **Cuba** for you. A month later, and I almost fainted, you know. I had my, in Yiddish [**indecipherable**] letter from my uncle, telling me that my other uncle, you know, that I left, and he was in the concentration camp in **Buchenwald** was liberated. His wife was liberated, and they tried to locate the daughter. And that my friend, this **Prather**(ph), that he was together with me in – in the – in the camps, and I helped him, is in **Munich**, and he's studying engineering, and they're going to get in touch with him to – he should help me escape. And pretty soon I received another letter, from **Munich**, from – and this letters wer – went to **Helmut**(ph) **Selten**(ph), not to me, of course, because I had to be very – very much – very much careful, because any – any step on the side, I would have been completely – I mean, they would send me to **Siberia**. Not even that, they would shoot me. There would be a court martial. So – can we interrupt for a minute?

Q: Yes. [**break**]

A: So I received – I received a letter from **Louie's** brother, who was in **Munich**, school of – engineering school, and beautiful letter from him, that he's going to try

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to do everything possible, that he received, he received a – a – a letter from **Cuba**, from my uncles. And incidentally, my – my letter [**indecipherable**] mine – my letter went to **Cuba**. I mean, not my letter, their – their – their – their telegram that they sent from the – from the Joint Distribution Center, they send it to the – to the Jewish Community Center. My uncle was the president at that time, from the community center. He was the one that brought most of the family, brought the other uncle, and everything. So **Prather**(ph) told me in his letter – I mean, he mentioned that he is going to – that he has a – a hunch that – that he has already somebody that – that will be able – be in – that's going to be helpful in my – in my defection from the Russian army. That time, I remember it was already – it was Passover. And **Helmut**(ph), I mean the contact was **Helmut**(ph) all the time.

Helmut(ph) calls me again and says there is – there is some people that came from [**indecipherable**] a husband and wife and a child. Three people. And they want to meet with me. So I made sure that nobody's following me, and I met with them. And this was a guy that was a – a smuggler. He used to smuggle from the – from the American – from the Russian zone, certain items to the American zone, and from the American zone to the Russian zone. So he approached me, told me that he is – that **Prather**(ph) sent him, and that he understand that I want to be helped to cross the border in a certain place, which he – he knows very well, he says. And he

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travels always with his wife and child, because that makes – doesn't gi – doesn't make him too – those – the people, and the guards to be suspicious. He didn't know that I am – I am in – in the Russian army, and **Prather**(ph) cautioned me against that, he said, don't tell him that you are in the army, because then he is not going to do that, and then he is not going to help you. So I told him, look, I'm also in the smuggling business, and I do this and this and that, and I have – have certain contacts which I want to see in the – in American zone, and this and that. So we arranged this. I went to the – I left him behind, I went to the **bahnhof**, to the train station, and there were a huge amount of people. I went in uniform, and I bought four tickets, to go like to – in the direction of **Bremen**, with the train. Then I – I took my motorcycle, and I took it to a safe place, and I called a guy, and say okay, we have the tickets. When do we go? He say, we have to go immediately. Says, there is no time to – to waste. I get myself –

Q: Can you hear him pretty well? He's talking so quietly?

Q2: Yeah, I – that's fine. Sorry to interrupt.

A: I have a – first of all, I calmed down for a minute, and I was very excited, because that was a – a – a incredible step to take, you know, because to – to go out – it's not to leave **Berlin**, because you see, **Berlin** ha – was in four sectors. But **Berlin** by itself, found itself within the Russian occupational zone, which means

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that in order to get out from **Berlin** is not to get out of **Berlin**, I had to get out from the whole zone, to cross through hundred – few hundred kilometers. And this is not – it's not easy, because although at that time, in 1947 – that was already 1947, in that time there was still not – there was still not as tight as it became tighter later. So I – I figured out, what shall I do? So I had a little, small caliber pistol, which I took away from my German officer, still in – in **Königsburg** – with – the handles were made from elephant bone. Beautiful, you know, it's – it was something remarkable. And I had a bunch of – first of all, in the – in the army, the Russian army I was paid as a officer, I received a certain amount of money in Russian rubles, and then a double amount in German occupational marks. I had money, I had more than what I can – was able to use. And incidentally, I used to send – every month I was able to send two packages, and I used to send to my relatives in – in – in **Kovno**, his family. Every – every month I send them two big packages, with all kind of goodies. So then I had my –

End of Tape Eight

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Beginning Tape Nine

Q: I'll let you finish –

A: Right. Let me finish – let me finish this part, which is – I will tell you something.

One day, I will talk to **Spielberg**, you know, one day we'll – we'll make a very profitable film for him. So – so I had my German **ausweis**, which I got from the chief of police when we were out hunting. I had my – my Russian **ausweis**. I had money, rubles, money in German occupational marks, and I have a little caliber pistol. And the little caliber was – was – and you will not believe for what. Not to shoot anybody, but to shoot myself if – if – if they would – if they would catch me because there's no question in my mind, th-they would – they would have done this without any reproach, you know. So – and then we moved to the – moved to the train, and I figured already everything out. I figured we have a long voyage to a small town which is going the direction to **Bremen**, but **Bremen** is in the eng – in the British Zone of occupation. But I felt that – I figured out, I said, I know that this train is going to be searched. There is going to be a – some type of guard is going to come in at some certain point to check the documenta – documents on the train. Because that was a normal procedure and I – I knew it's going to happen. I also – I thought to myself, it's going to come in a German guard, I'm going to show them that I am a Russian and I traveled there to see some relatives. And I didn't have a

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problem because I – I had also this **Baruck**(ph), my colonel, was out of town. He was in – in **Moscow** for a conference, and I had the right to – to – to travel to a certain – certain distance, because I need – I needed a special permit, which I didn't have. But I could – I could justify my trip, you know, because I didn't – I didn't carry with me any – any – any belongings or anything, it's just only a small thing. Then I said, if it comes a Russian, I'm going to identify myself as a German. What can I do? Okay. We – we travel. The train was crowded. I mean, so crowded it was that – were unable to turn. Suddenly, we come to a certain point, there's soldiers. Russian and Germans together. I say, that's my day. That's my day, what shall I do? And I had to think quickly. I was next to the guy with the – with his wife, and we were chatting and – and here comes the guard, documents, documents, documents. I ventured to pull out my German rather than Russian, and I think I made the right decision, you know. In the middle of – of – of – of looking at my – checking my document, the child starts crying. And some way that tension was deflected, and I was da – I – I think it was a sheer – sheer luck for me, you know. And they just only ask me where I travel, and I said – I knew right town and **[indecipherable]**. So why do you come **[indecipherable]**. And I said a few words in German, you know, and – and my worries were over. They came to the – almost to the border. We come off. Then he said to me, no, we have to go now. We have to walk now for about two

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kilometers, because there is a place where I will always go through, but there is a very little where – sometimes even – they don't have even a guard on the border. Because you see, it's not a natural border, now where they – which they had – when they made later, in the later years, like when they – when they had the air supply, **Berlin**, and th-that was much more difficult to escape now. But in 1947, was still – you know, it was still at a point where the war was still – I mean, they were still not – not so organized now. And I remember when we crossed – I mean, there – we heard some shots on the other side [**indecipherable**] but it was not relevant. We crossed and there were – not the last, there were quite a few people who – who crossed. Apparently, this was the place where we crossed the border. And there was a big sign that said, you are entering the British Zone of occupation. If you have some armaments, or some illegal – illegal items, the **kommandantur** is here, here, and here. You have to immediate identify yourself and deliver that to the **kommandantur**. I kissed the ground when I found myself in this. And then I – I pulled out, the first thing, I-I threw my pistol and I said, the hell with that, I was going to throw – this guy grabs me by the hand, he says, what is that? I didn't know you were armed, he said to me. I said, why not? And he said, it's – it's completely prohibited. You cannot have arms. I mean, it's – it's – it's against – I mean, it's against the – the – the – the – the terms, you know. So who are you? What ha – you

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are not a smuggler like you told me. I said, no, no, I'm sorry to tell you, but I'm a Russian officer. He says, you're crazy. How come you didn't tell me? I say, because I didn't feel it was irrel – relevant to tell you. He said, give me, give me. Let me see the pistol. I said – he say [indecipherable], took it, he says, you know what, I'm going to bury that right here. When I come back, I'll take it. It's worth – it's worth 500 dollars, he say, that's – this is so beautiful. This – this is real – real elephant bone handle. I mean, that's – it's worth a fortune. I said, you can have it. You need some marks? I told him, you have here marks also, because they are useless here. Because I had – I had the Russian occupation – I mean, the German occupational marks, which belong to the – on the Russian border – on the – the – the Russian zone, not the – the – the British and the American zone had different – different marks, you know. So I gave it to him and then we went to – from there we went to **Bremen**. In **Bremen**, we slept in the – in the railroad station. I red – I had my knapsack and my – my boots were my – my pillow. I was so happy. From there I had to go to **Bergen-Belsen**, which was in the vicinity, because there I had my contact. So I went to **Bergen-Belsen**, spend there a night. And then I found the man that's supposed to take me back to – take me to **Munich**. And then I came to **Munich**, my friend was ecstatic. He had a little, tiny-miney room, you know, big as my closet here. And he says, we can share it, I mean, you can stay here. And for the

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first time, I had a good meal, you know. Fantastic, you know, say – with some American products, and some other thing. I forgot to mention to you that when we were in the – in **Berlin**, I had to mention to you something very important, that I – I overlooked something. Being in **Berlin**, we had a – I had a special mission. I don't know how many people are aware, but I-I don't think too many are aware of that. I'm going to tell you that they – they have transplanted factories from Berlin to some – they – they used to take them to different parts of **Russia**. So I was assigned a mission with a truck with three soldiers to go to – they have – taking out the **IG Farben** company from **Berlin**, and they are supposed to be shipped to **Leningrad** to dismantle completely. Not only dismantle, what they have – our assignment was to take the workers, including even the – the – the – the lowest paid guy, like, the – the – the guy that cleans the factory. Everybody had to be placed on a train by five o'clock in the morning. And we used to come with a truck and come to the house and knock on the door and say, out in five minutes. **Sei haben** five **minuten**. So you have five minutes to – to get your belongings and – and out on the car. This was such a pleasure, this task that I had. Of course, it was nothing compared to what they have done to me. But it was, I – I cer – I found a certain – although, I didn't have anything against the – against the guys, those guys that worked there in the factory, no. Now, this – this factory, for a fact, they were so organized – the – the –

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the Russians were so organi – disorganized, that it took them **X** amount of months to reach the destiny for the factory. And then they found out that part of the factory went to one place, to **Smolensk** and the other one went to **Leningrad**. And tha-that was the what – what the – but if that – what th – I had to mention that, because that was a very, very unique experience, you know, whereby I – I was in charge of – of taking – I mean, to – disassembling and taking those people to the train station at five o'clock, and – and it – it was a – a remarkable – you know, sometimes you remember certain – certain – so okay, so wh-when I came – when I came to **Munich**, I – it happened to be those people that I used to send packages. Those relatives were in **Feldafing**.

Q: They were in **Munich**?

A: Next to **Munich** was small **DP** camps. One was **Landsberg**, and the other was – was **Feldafing**. They were in **Feldafing**. So I stayed couple days in **Prather's** home, and then he took me to **Feldafing**, because they are – they're relatives. And this lady, **Fruma(ph) Lankavich(ph)**, she went out her way to accommodate me and to – and to – and to help me out. And what – what I wanted basically is to – to get – get out from **Germany** and go to – to **Cuba**. So there was – I asked her – from there, I wrote already freely, you know, to – to **Cuba**, and they – they send me some – they send me letters, and they send me also a letter saying that they have –

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they instituted a visa in – in – in fr – in **Paris**, to go to – I mean to – in order to come to Cuba. Now, how do you go to **Paris**? I don't have any – any – any documents. So I start working on documents. In the meantime, a guy came by and he said that he is – he's capable to – you know, we're very desperate, you know. The time was now important to – to get out. I mean, we just wanted to reach already a destiny, after so many pain and suffering. So we had – the guy said that for a hundred dollars, he is going to make me false papers to travel to **France**. So I – I found a – a – a friend of – of the family, with the name of **Bernard Picard**(ph), who also in **Kovno** ghetto. And he was a brigadier, the other brigade, **Bernard Picard**(ph). And he le – he lend me the – the hundred dollars. And I gave it to the guy and he made me this paper, it didn't look to me good, but I figured he – he – he knows what he's doing. But through the train, we went to **Strasbourg**, and through **Sargebiet**, you know. And when we came to **France**, the **Sûreté** came out, the French police took us off an-and – and sent – was going to send us back. And I – I got very, very scared so I took out certain things that I had from the Russians and I just flushed it down the toilet, you know. Because I figured maybe they are going to send me back to the [**indecipherable**] – you know, that time you were fearful, you didn't know. They might send you back to – to your destiny, where you – you were coming from. So then I came back to – to **Feldafing**, and we start working legally.

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And she helped me so much, this **Fruma**(ph). Fortunately, they went later to **Canada**, and she's passed away now. So then – then I was able to – I got – I got already the – the real papers went to **France**, and then there I had my visa. I spent in **France** a few days, and then I found out, in order to go to **United States** – to **Cuba**, I have to go through **United States** and I need a visa. This is eight months. You had to wait for eight months for – to get – to get a visa to **United States**. So I started – I had all – I found also a other guy that was going to **Cuba**, by the name – same name like me, **Abraham**, but his name was **Rabinowitz**(ph). And he told me, wherever you go, I go with you. I said, fine. So I start walking up and down in – in **France**, in **Paris**, and – and looking. I spoke a little English, you know, it was easier for me because he didn't. And I start looking. Finally, I found – we found a maiden flight of a six-motor hydroplane from Air **France**, that was going to **Dakar, Africa**, and **Port-Étienne**. And from there – and to – from **Dakar** to **Port-Étienne**. So we – what I did is, we had our tickets from **Pan American**. We exchanged that, and the company, they gave us credit and some way we hustled around and – and all – all together – and all together, what we had was 10 dollars in our pocket. Then we took the trip with this six-motor hid – hydroplane and it took us – it was an incredible flight, you know. They gave us champagne and we felt like kings already there. And then when we came to – to **Port-Étienne**, we had to go to **Antigua** – British

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Antigua. So from there, we went – we had to take a boat and go there, to British **Antigua**. And then from British **Antigua**, we found out that in order to go to **Cuba**, we need still an American transit visa because we have to stay in **Puerto Rico**, which is an American –

Q: You were carrying a French passport now?

A: I didn't have a passport.

Q: No?

A: I ha – I had a paper which says, stateless A – a – a person without a country. That was there for everybody's standards. It was like – so finally, in – in **Antigua**, there was a – it's a very small British island, but very clean. I remember comparing it to the – to the – to – to the French, which was just the opposite. The counsel was staying at the same hotel that we stayed there. And the lady that – we told her our stories and made arrangements for us to – to see the counsel the next day. So next day when we went in, and so the first question of the counsel was, do you have some money to sleep overnight in – in – in – in **Puerto Rico**? I said, of course. I show him the 10 dollars very proudly. When I came out, I gave it to my friend. He came in with the same 10 dollars, and show that he has also 10 dollars, because that was the minimum that you can have. And then August 1st – and from there we cabled my uncle that we were coming down. So August 1st, 1947, I landed in

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Camagüey [indecipherable] in **Havana**, and my uncle came with his car to pick me up and pick up my – my friend. And this was the way we came to **Cuba**.

Q: Long trip.

A: It was a long trip but I found somebody waiting for me.

Q: Now –

A: Now, go ahead with the questions.

Q: I have a couple of questions. I want you to turn your chair back a little bit this way.

A: That's not the question, that's the answer. **[break]**

Q: Go on, keep going. Okay, now, there are a couple of things that we talked about.

A: That are missing.

Q: Yes. One is the – the **Ninth Fort**.

A: Yeah, the – yeah, right.

Q: In late – late 1943. You can tell me what your memory is of that?

A: Yes. This – this is is precisely – I have a book of that which I have not had a chance to – to read. The – the **Ninth Fort** was one of the most vicious and criminal places in – in the – **Lithuania**, whereby, most of the – most of the inmates from – from the camps were taken, and – taken. And it was – we had few forts, but the **Ninth Fort** was the – was the one that's for – were the – that was best equipped to –

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to kill and also to dispose of the bodies. But you see, there were so many – so many people were killed – or murdered, not killed – at the **Ninth Fort**, that they didn't have – didn't give them time to get rid of the bodies. So what they did is, they used to burn – they used to place them in – in – in – in rows, you know, one on top of the other one. But then, apparently towards at the end of 1943, there came a order from the **Reichs** command that it has to be something done in order to eliminate the bodies. So they were – they looked for a **Sonderkommando**, and they took a number of – of people and – of Jews from the – from – from the ghetto. And they had decided they had some other people, which they kept there for a long time. What they used to do with those people is, after they – after they did their – their dirty work, they used to kill them and then bring in some new people, you know, because they – they always tried to – to hide their tracks behind – and – and – and the evidence behind them. So they brought in this contingency of the **Sonderkommando**, and they were there for some time, and they – they tried to – they exhumed the – the bodies and they tried to burn them. And the way they did – they used to do that, they used to lay them in – in layers and – and put in wood in between and then pour gas and then – and the, of course, in the concentration camps they used crematoriums, which were more – more advanced technology. This, they did it in more primitive way. And incidentally, I have some friends who are –

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especially one friend that send me now a book, that escaped, one of the escapees. I mean, this was an incredible, incredible escape, which is like escaping from **Sing Sing**, or for – whereby, they – they have plan. They knew that they are not going to last too long because after they burn, I mean, they are going to be one of those who are going to be burned also. So what they plotted is, they found themselves that they – they have, **New Year's** Eve, they have some way got some additional – additional liquor for the guards and they – when they were drunk, they traced – they had a map of the ninth – of the **Ninth Fort** and they – some way they were able to escape and this was a escape like a large group of – of – of people was able to escape, you know. And this –

Q: Where did they go?

A: Pardon?

Q: Where did they go?

A: They – many of them went to the – to the partisans. Especially my friend. He joined the – he joined the – the freedom fighters, and he – he survived. I mean, he – he survived being in the underground in the freedom fighters.

Q: When you refer to the partisans, are you talking about Russian partisans, Lithuanian partisans, Jewish partisans?

A: They were – they were a mixture. They were a mixture. They had – they had –

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most – most of the time, they had Lithuanian – had – had a – in some cases, where head of the partisans was – were Lithuanian. In many cases, more of the cases, they were – they were Russians. But there were some few Lithuanian partisans, head of partisans also, depending in what section were you, in what part of the –

Q: But did they fight together in the same groups?

A: No, not necessarily, no.

Q: So when the people from **Kovno** –

A: Yeah.

Q: – went out into the –

A: Right.

Q: – forest to fight like you did for a while, were you basically on your own or were you – you – you had a different experience, but –

A: Yeah, I was, yes.

Q: – but – but did they ever join up with the Russians?

A: They – they used to – they used to try to join up at one point. But it was always – it was – practically, it was not to be in big groups, because big groups are spotted much easier than smaller groups. Even when they had bigger groups, they used to separate themselves in – in – in smaller groups, and disperse themselves in different – in different places.

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Q: What I was trying to understand is if the Russians had the Jewish
partisans [**indecipherable**]

A: They were a supply – they were not – they were in – in some places, they were
in the **Rudnitski(ph) Pushche**, there were Jewish partisans. Some of them there are
still the **Belski(ph) [indecipherable]**. They were – they were strong, maybe five –
600. That was a big, big contingency. But there were **pushche**, you know, **pushche**
means? It's a forest which is very dense and very, very difficult to penetrate. It's
like a jungle. But normally, **Lithuania** was not so dense, and especially where we
were, close to **Janava**. There was a forest, but it was not this type, not a great, great
forest.

Q: How many – how long were you out in the forest?

A: About five weeks.

Q: Would you say that as a full sentence?

A: Pardon? Pardon?

Q: Would you say that as a full sentence?

A: Oh, yeah. I was about close to five weeks in the – in **Janava welder(ph)**.

Janava, which is not too far away from **Kovno**.

Q: When you – when you traveled back into **Kovno** with the Russian army, and you
saw what had happened to the city, it must have been a – it must have been an

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incredible feeling to go back into –

A: You mean when I came back to the ghetto? First – first – first trip was – my trip was to the ghetto. I mean, I – I – I was very anxious to find out what happened to the house where I lived and to the – and to the basement where we had – where very ingen – ingeniously, we – we used to make basements even during the time in the ghetto, in many places. And that's the reason why they – somebody – somebody – I mean, betrayed us, you know. There were some-somebody betrayed many, many of those, bu – and that's one of reasons why they came in. How did the Germans find out? Because this was done so carefully. The – the – the – the sand or the – the soil was taken so carefully, and it was done in the nighttime. And it was like – like – termites, you know, a slow, very slow process. And how did they know where it is? Imagine, in – in – in my house, when I came in, we had – what we had is steps to the second floor. So what we did is – it was like, professionally engineered. We were able to take out a whole step and right through there, slide into the – to – to the basement.

Q: To hide?

A: Pardon?

Q: To hide?

A: To hide. To hide – in fact, hide things there where I – where was I – hidden my –

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my cousin.

Q: A lot of people made hiding places?

A: A lot of people made hiding places, yeah. And – and for some reason, they – they found out. My place was open. When I came, it was open. And I found only some photographs. I didn't find anything else, you know. But it was not – it was not destroyed. It was not bombed. But in many other cases, were bombed. And some people were buried under the – under the rubble of the – of the – of the – they used to come in and throw grenades to make sure that – just the Germans would come into a house and whether there is somebody or not, throw a grenade and everything would – if one was not sufficient, throw a other grenade.

Q: Did you s – did you see any Jewish people around? Were there other people around when you –

A: No, no. When I came I – I didn't – I didn't see anybody. I mean, I saw people wandering, but I found out that there were – there were – few families saved themselves. And they were able to come out, to come – although they exploded most of them, but few families – but that was really – I came in, it was already five, six days after they liberated the – the city, you know, so people already came out. Some way they sensed that they are – that they are free, and they – and they came out. So I was not able, but I – I went – I went in down – down to the – and I found –

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I found some photographs which I – which I cherish. And I – and I have them with me so far, you know, so –

Q: Do you think that there was a special spirit of defiance in **Kovno**, when people – like, the people escaping from the **Ninth Fort**, or the hiding, or the going to the forest? Do you think there was something unique about this, as a spiritual resistance?

A: Of course. I think it was in every place. The only thing is that – that people – it's very hard for people to understand that – that in **Lithuania** was – you see, I don't know about **Poland** as much, you know – but in **Lithuania**, was very difficult to – to penetrate and to go through because we have – we had two layers of – of – of difficulties. One was that the Lithuanians were very, very much anti-Semitic in a sense, and they would – they would betray – most of them, you know, most of them – betray anybody that tried to hide or that tried to reach something. Because many – most of my friends were killed by – were – were – were – I mean, caught by – by Lithuanians. The same time when I – I was almost caught by a Lithuanian. It was not a German. German wouldn't know me fr-from – from nothing, whether I am Jewish or not, you know. But they – they have sense, they have – they – they were able to identify. And it was extremely, extremely difficult, and they were not cooperative. They – they didn't provide you with arms, they betrayed you, they –

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they did – they did – they did everything possible to – to hurt you rather than to help you. So it was extremely difficult, but it was – the spirit of resistance was always there. Of course, we – we didn't have this – this help, the necessary – you have to hel – have to – you have to have outside help in order – without outside help, you cannot – you cannot do anything, you know. I mean, it's – it's not a matter that – that you can serve yourself. Where – where are you going to get armaments? Where – where are you going to – I mean, you have to have help, contact. Notwithstanding that –

End of Tape Nine

Conclusion of Interview