

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Dov Levin
November 10, 1998
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Dov Levin, conducted by Randy Goldman on November 10, 1994 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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DOV LEVIN
November 10, 1994

Q: You could just begin by telling me your name and date of birth and where you were born.

A: Certainly. My name is Dov Levin now. And I was born like Belle Levin. Belle its means in Yiddish, Bill, animal, so the translation in Hebrew is Dov, but because we were all the time brought up in Hebrew school, Hebrew youth movement, this also, this what many, many people know me. It is -- I was born in 1925 in Kovno, it's called now Kaunas. It was capital of Lithuania, because Wilno was occupied by the Polish soldiers and so on. So, in 1925, it was still a Jewish autonomy, Lithuania. So, if I would lucky, so I could find my certificate of birth, written in Lithuanian language and in Hebrew. Maybe one day I will find it, but what is more important for our conversation is that I was one of twins. My sister was Basya (ph), or in Hebrew Batya (ph), and she unfortunately, perished in Stutthof, during the Holocaust, and after her my, one of my kids Basmat, who is now living in New York, she is named after her. Basmat, a very cute girl. And I have to tell something about my parents. My father was Hirsh Levin, in Hebrew, it's Tzvi, in Lithuanian it's changed the word H is G -- Girsh. My mother -- he is also from Kovno, my mother came from a small village by the name Retchna (ph). It is in north, northwest of Kovno, and her maiden name was Wigodel (ph), some write it with a W, some with a V, but her first name, I forgot to tell, that it is Bluma (ph). Bluma. Bluma it means a flower, therefore, my second daughter is named Nitzana (ph), it means the crisp before the flower come out. My son is called Tzvika (ph), on the name of my father.

Q: Tell me a little bit about Kovno before the war. Was it an exciting place to live? Was there a lot to do culturally, politically?

A: When I was a child, I -- for me Kovno was everything. It was everything because we could find there everything what belongs to the Jewish life, from our synagogue to our school in Hebrew or Yiddish, till many universal things like cinemas and so on and so on. So we felt ourself as a part of Europe. Part of, I would say, Western Europe, or Europe, yes. It was an orientation. In our house the German language was one of the languages spoken, because my father used to work with German companies, and after Hitler came he changed a little and went to other companies in England. So, he now house the coming and going people from abroad and what's most important is we have very good connection with Palestine. Actually my generation, or part of my generation we were dreaming about Palestine like we were there, and the geography of Palestine, I knew better than the geography of our country, of Lithuania. The same also with the languages. The Lithuanian language we only had to do it for examinations and so on. But the daily language was Hebrew. Hebrew. Hebrew at the school. Hebrew in the youth movement, and Hebrew when I make my first date with a girl in the street, we also did Hebrew, and my parents understand Hebrew. See, I wasn't one. It was a culture, a part of the culture. The -- not everybody was the same kind, but let's say 50 percent of my generation was the same in Kovno. This time in Kovno, I remember there were many, many shuls (ph), or synagogues, about 40 I remember from there, and I think it was more or less right, a

real number, and I attend a Hebrew primary school. Afterwards what we called gymnasium, it means high school. I was in Hebrew, and my youth movement was called Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair (ph). So, we were oriented for to go after we attend our school, to Palestine and there or to be on the kibbutz, or to go to the Techni, Technion in Haifa -- that was my other _____.

Q: Why were you so intrigued or driven towards Palestine?

A: I cannot understand it now, but it was so natural the same as a I was born Jewish. So it was a part of all I been, my family, my bigger family. It was our culture, our orientation, so we took it for granted that so should be. Even one of my uncles went to Russia, but he was an exception. His name was Borris Levin, and only this week I met his daughter. She come now from Moscow to settle here in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Q: What -- I'd like to hear a little bit more about the Youth Movement that you were involved in, the group you just mentioned. What was the basis of that? What were you taught? What kind of activities did you participate in?

A: You know, most of the youth movements are alike more or less. They are making sport games and making journeys and making camps, summer camps and other camps, singing a lot, a lot, a lot, and telling stories. Very nice stories mostly about Israel and about the kibbutzim and making it very idealistic and really for me Eretz Yisrael, Palestine, was like in the pictures, that palm tree with tent and chalutzim (ph), pioneers, are dancing around, sometimes also working. So that also was the contents of our activities. We were -- they told us what is the daily life, not in Tel Aviv, like in the kibbutzim. And that was made by emissaries, shlichim (ph) in Hebrew, which come very often to us, so we knew also the later songs from Palestine and we very up to date what's going there, what happened there. Sometimes more than what happened in our own country.

Q: Did they teach you how to use weapons, how to fight if you needed to, any of those sorts of things?

A: No. Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair was one of the few organizations that were socialist minded. So, the orientation of weapon was only for defense. So, they talked with us about the shomrim (ph), it means the guardsmen in Palestine that at night they are riding on the horses and that was a _____. I remember even the names of these guys. So, but, it was only a need, but not too much, in the opposite let's say of the Beitar Movement, they were really military oriented. And I remember in our class, in the Hebrew class, let's say half of the class was -- belonged to Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair, the other to Beitar, so we are quarrelling. One of the discussions was how do you mean to settle in Palestine, only by buying an acre after an acre ground and to work. Each country must be taken only by force that the history is in all the countries in all the world, all the times. So, we were quarrelling and so on and some times we are also beating each others. So it was not only in our class, it was like in all places. The community is divided in many

orientations, in many ideologies, but our whole community from the Communists till the most, most Orthodox people like my late grandfather, his name was David Levin. He was a patriarchic Jew, a very strong man, like in these times. Not like my father, my father was already another generation, more liberal. So, this whole community was Jewish. We cannot remember intermarriage, and if it happens, so everybody knew who is who and it was something. I remember that also that in our classroom, one girl brought one day -- we were without hats, we were -- it was more traditional but not Orthodox, anyway, when one of my girlfriends from the class, a classmate, she brought a sandwich with butter and meat, so everybody shouts, "Look what's happened, she's eating so and so." So, the public mind of the class was against maybe the other day she didn't know because she didn't felt herself convenient. I even remember her name. It was Tanya Tzvi. Tanya Tzvi, yes. And she's still living. She's in Tel Aviv. Yes.

Q: So, it was a very religious community?

A: Not very, but it was very Yiddish, Jewish minded. For instance, Shabbat (ph), I think 95 percent of the stores, Jewish stores were closed. Orthodox, or not Orthodox, or traditional or anti-traditional, only the last years we are accepts, yes accepts. And only some cafe houses or other places but usually they are closed and it was not an easy problem because for the government we had also had to be closed Sundays. So, it was lose of two days of earning. Anyway, so it was.

Q: So you're talking about Kovno and Slobotka, the whole area?

A: Yes.

Q: Which area did you grow up in?

A: I grew up in the -- now we can call it the down town of Kovno, but not Slobotka. Slobotka was a suburb. You have to cross a river by the name of Viliya (ph), or now it's called Nairis (ph). In Slobotka were concentrated for many, many years a more poor population. More poor, some of them very Orthodox but some -- on the other hand there were many people who were Communist oriented. And that -- anyway I can think that in my classroom only one boy was from Slobotka and it's also because his mother was a dentist there.

Q: Let me ask you something because you just mentioned Communists. There were also youth groups that were Communist oriented right?

A: Yes.

Q: I'm just sort of wondering how one chose to belong to Beitar versus the Communists. What were some of the differences? Did -- was there any interaction between these groups?

A: Interactions were what I mentioned before, it's fighting.

Q: How did you decide to join the group you chose?

A: Oh. Yes, I remember that it was a very deep sympathy for this because they were also scouts and when I was a child I like much to be a scout. And officially Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair for the government we are calling Jewish Scouts. Maybe if I would be in another society and my father was be very right, political right orientation, maybe, I was sent or not sent be encouraged to go to Beitar. I remember another thing that I have quarrels with my parents because I went Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair. For them it was too left. Afterwards when I grew up, when I was a teenager, so it was incidents, sometimes instead to go to the synagogue I went to the activities there. But it was not only my problem, it was a problem for a whole generation and it happens in all the countries till now. Yeah.

Q: What about the Communist groups. Did you know people who joined those?

A: Yes, they were for us very mysterious because the Communist party and the other people were in underground. This party wasn't allowed in Lithuania, because Lithuania was very much right oriented and what I remember that the -- May, first May we watched many times that police forces are ready for demonstrations and we saw that sometimes red flags at were hanged that night and morning the police made effort to put them down. Of course as young people we were sympathizing with the Communists, but it was for us very not -- unclear who is a Communist, why and what. We knew its have to do something with Russia, Soviet Russia of course, but not too much more. I would not say it was a puzzle for us, but something mystery.

Q: I think you said that you sort of sympathized when their demonstrations were put down. Why would you sympathize with them?

A: Oh, that's like a child what -- who don't police, the cops.

Q: Now in 1940, I think, the Russians took over Kovno, right?

A: Yes.

Q: How did that change your life?

A: Oh, it was a big change, yes. I remember it was at Shabbat, Saturday, the 15th of June. We were in this day in summer camp of Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair and my counselor was afterwards a very known woman, Chaika Grossman (ph) from Bialystok. She told us this days -- this day but not only this day as she left oriented -- orientated -- girl or young woman escaped from the Russian in Bialystok, and came as refugee to Lithuania because

she was a Zionist and she could not live under the Soviets, even, even Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair was very, very much orient -- Soviet oriented, so it was how to tell you, half, half, mixed feelings about Soviet Russia. And now this Shabbat we heard -- the Saturday -- we heard noise, afterwards I understood that it was the movings of tanks and we left everything and we moved very quickly to house, by foot. It was about eight miles or so to go back by foot. And his place was Claiboneshkis (ph). It's the opposite side of Slobotka but on the Kovno side. It was a village, a small village and I remember that going home we saw many Lithuanians with angry faces. Some of them took their guns because they belonged to a semi-military organization called Shaulei (ph), Shootings Man. So, they wear uniforms some of them, and some took the guns and they were running here and there like something happened and they didn't know what to do. Bur they were very angry and didn't so of course smile to us. Of course, the opposite. So I understood that something is going to be wrong. That is a feeling. To me as a Jewish boy, boy, I was then 15 years old, yeah, 15 and a half. So, we came to Kovno, and Kovno was a very like a festival. People are staying in the streets and making a _____ for the Red Army. Jewish, non Jewish, all mixed, the crowd. And I went straight home because to see what happened, and that was beginning of the Soviet era in Kovno that lasted one year and seven days. For me personally, it was a very bad -- no it was not a bad time, it was also interesting time. First of all, I was shocked by the closing of school. Hebrew school was abolished and we have to in the same, yes in the same building we have to learn Yiddish. I couldn't understand it. Who is forcing me, why? I knew all because they were against zionism and Hebrew is like a Zionist language. We were very against, and the other thing was Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair was abolished. And on the other hand, it was very interesting time, every second day there was a parade, a meeting, a demonstration with songs, very famous songs, that we -- some of them we heard even before, like "Katusha" (ph). (humming). It's -- in Israel it's popular till now, but no more in Russia. And other songs -- marches --

Q: These were Russian songs?

A: These were Russian songs, of course. The French did it in another way, till now, but the Russian song "Katusha". Katusha is the name of a Russian girl, Katia, Katy.

Q: What other -- what other changes in terms of people's lifestyles were made when the Soviets took over -- were business closed? I mean, what -- was it more difficult to be a Jew openly, or --

A: No, not at all. It's the contrary, now we become really equal citizens. I could see Jewish policemen. I was very proud in this, first time, but the same time for instance my father should to work at Saturday. My father, how my father, but my grandfather was very Orthodox man so they took away him from his store, put in a comissar and he have to sit home and to count his days, nothing. I'm not sure that he gets a small pension. I don't know, maybe we helped him. Till this day he was a well-to-do man. What you call your middle-middle, but now he become unemployed even though he was about 70-75 years,

but still he was every day going to the store. The store was more than a place for earning. It was occupation, there everybody came to him and so, and so it was like a club. And that happened to many people. So nobody, nobody starve from hunger, nobody, but it happened after things that people were rich had to go out and leave their nice apartment and suites and sometimes also their cars. Poor people for them it was a better change. And for me as a socialist, or socialist-oriented, I could understand it and evaluate it. Even for my family it was bad. Another of my uncles was -- he visit twice Palestine and hesitate if to settle or not, now they took all his fabric, what's is -- factory. It was a factory of leather, a big one. They were working in it I guess about 35 or 40 workers. And one of them became the commissar, he was thrown out, and I understand he was very sorry he didn't go to Palestine with his wife. His name was Moses Levin. I have here, I am keeping many papers and forms of his factory till now. I got them last year. So, this is an example of a family that something changes the life. My mother has also to work. Till then she was a housekeeper like all the balabustes (ph) in our class, also a middle-middle, upper -- no it was middle-middle, enough. Here she has to work everyday so there were some days that all the family didn't meet because one is working afternoon. One is working from morning until noon. And Shabbos -- Saturday we can not also meet like we used. So it was something new for me but I wasn't too happy about this.

Q: Let me ask you one question about the different groups. Now before the Soviets took over, you said the Communist youth groups were really underground. Did they become more important under that year of Soviet rule than some of the Zionist movements?

A: Of course, they become now the rulers, the mayflowers. Of course. For them -- especially these people who were sitting for months or years. One of them was 20 years sitting in the prisons. They become the commissars. I remember the commissar was in my grandfather's store. He was still without hair, you know, because in the prisons they have to cut their hair. So he was still very new released from the prison and the government gave them new clothes, mostly leather coats. The commissars, that's the tradition of Soviet Russia from the October revolution and so on and anyway that was the gona (ph), the gona it means it closes. Also, my father didn't wear more his hat and wear a caskette (ph), we call it, like a Stalin hat on his head. That what modern, to be a politaria (ph) man and a socialist and so on and so on. And I remember also me, in -- when I was in the high school, I have a special uniform, so the uniforms they called it "Habits of the Bourgeoi." No more everybody is wearing what he wants and what you are more closer to the model of study and all the other big shots, such a shirt not too much with a tie. So the people understood that that is more wanted now. So, it was a big change but there were many concerts and the cultural life was very, very intensive. The first time to go to the theater was then for me.

Q: Why?

A: Because to go into the theater before, it was a problem to get a ticket in the big theater and here in the Yiddish theater I didn't want to go because it was kiche (ph) and I was not

too much involved in the Yiddish culture, except talking Yiddish and reading Jewish newspaper, daily newspaper. In our city there were about four newspapers, daily newspapers, in such a small city as Kovno.

Q: Jewish daily newspapers -- all four Jewish?

A: Yiddish, Yiddish not Jewish. There was only one weekly in Lithuanian, and that also was made more for political terms. So, coming back to your question, so please remind me.

Q: We were talking the -- about how the Communist groups became much more important.

A: It was very natural that they become. It was their time now. People coming from the underground to the public. Well, as a members of the Communist party and the people who belong in other ways to this party or to this movement or to this ideology who were before or in prisons or in non-legal situation, they become now big shots, and it was very -- naturally it was very -- everybody could understand it and what happened that some people were far from them, now went to see, maybe one of his family is also between them. Maybe he will be now helped by them, privileged by them, to get a job. It wasn't so easy to get a job, because everybody have to fulfill questionnaires. Who you are, who was your father, what was your income and so on and to which organizations you did belong and etc. So some people even they were before bourgeois, what belonged to the so-called bourgeois, or it was another name. Enemy of the people. Now, if they have a good one of the family who was a Communist and he was not afraid to help them, not afraid, some denied, "Okay you are my cousin, but I know who you are, so please leave me alone." Some of them helped also and what another thing that we have seen many people that were very rich before and not only they were leaved on their places but they became -- they make even a progress, they are promoted. So, we were told that even before they paid contributions to the Communists funds. Or maybe they have them more, maybe they were spies, I don't know what they were such -- we called them -- how did we call them? Salon (ph) Communists.

Q: One more question and then I want to move onto the Germans. You said -- your organization became illegal. Did you continue -- did Beitar and some of the other organizations continue but on an underground basis now?

A: Yes. Some of the organizations began to -- no, officially they abolished themselves in order to avoid troubles. They declared -- some of the Zionist groups or even religious groups who were, who were abolished, I think all of them declared officially that they stopped their work, their activity in order to avoid troubles. But bit by bit some of the members who were accustomed to meet every day or every few days together continue to do it, and then somebody gave them an orientation that if you want you can do it, but nobody is responsible for you, do it yourself or you won't. And so they established small cells like before the Communists did it, in the near past. So, now the Zionists did it and my organization, my youth movement, Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair, I remember that some of

them, some of them were meeting each day -- no, not each day, twice a week maybe, to read Hebrew books. That was activity. Because it's not forbidden, but not fashionable -- it an understatement -- so they did it. When I want to join them, they said, "We are too much, no, go look another place." After that they told me that they were afraid of me. I don't know why, maybe because I have some friends who were in the Youth Communist's Party -- movement, youth movement called Consomole (ph). So that they told me afterwards. Anyway, so I did -- what I did myself in order to express my feelings, afternoon or at night I come to the, to a new -- through this old building of the high school and stole Hebrew books and brought them home and I was very happy. Yes. For me it was like I did what I have to do, what I like to do and nobody -- maybe I can be punished for this but only for stealing but not for reading the Hebrew books, because I also, my old Hebrew books that I got for bar mitzvah and other things I -- they were kept. We didn't throw them. I remember also that even the religious was very unpopular and some of us were forced to come to the school Yom Kippur and Pesach, and so on. We tried to keep at home how we could -- and me I was not so happy with that religion in this time. I understand it because that is something of all continuity so I did it also, no too much, but I did it. So I remember Shabbat when our family were together, so sometimes place my father also make Kiddush (ph) and I didn't refuse. What happened at this time -- yes -- I didn't stop to write letters to Palestine.

Q: You could have gotten in trouble, yes?

A: Yes or not, I don't know. It could be. The question how they would comment it, the authorities. Another thing, I also heard the _____ of Jerusalem. It was very hard, but it was a technical problem so I remember I wrote to one of my friends of the class, my classmates, his names was Amos Rabinovitz (ph), Amos Rabinovitz, that why you will not tell your authority to make better that we can hear it even in Lithuanian Kovno.

Q: You can probably guess one of the reasons I'm asking you about these youth groups and whether you had to go underground and all of that is because later on you were involved in resistance activities, and I'm wondering if any of the tricks you learned, any of the relationships you formed as a boy were important later on. Were a way that you kind of developed that helped you and got you interested in resistance activities later?

A: Yes, partly, I didn't belong to the cells usually which numbered three or four members. I told you why and there was no trouble on this, but I knew and also we knew, all the generations, about underground because we were brought up what I told you of Jewish modern history that -- and not only Jewish history but about the socialists or revolutionaries in Russia against the Czar. So, we knew what to do and we saw many films about this, so it was not very new for us. But there were some people who begin at this time to publish a underground newspaper in Hebrew, but that I learned not at this time but in the ghetto afterwards.

Q: Okay, let's -- I want to move ahead a little bit. Do you remember what was happening the

day that Kovno was occupied by the Germans?

A: Kovno was occupied by the Germans not the first day of war, but the third day. It was Tuesday. You know what, I felt a little better because the bombing stopped and we have no special shelters so we were hiding ourselves in -- on the stairs between the floors, because it was in the middle of a very heavy building, it was the safest place. And you have to run, and here and there. So, first of all was its relaxation, a certain relaxation. We can go to bed, maybe and we can eat a time more or less that was the first reaction. We knew that we have not to expect good times. That we knew very good from the refugees who came to us and from the newspapers I had also knew not exactly but a lot what they did when they came in Poland a year ago and so on and so on but everybody is thinking that to me it will not come. And I remember that the day before somebody informed us from our house it was my also from my classroom his name is Avraham Yashpan (ph). He is now living in Rio de Janeiro and told me, "Look, I'm going to escape to Russia. They will slaughter us." They, it means not only Germans, but everybody except the Jewish. We felt that the Lithuanians don't like us, or hate us, better. We felt it, but we didn't know how much. So, I told him I cannot leave my family. Or in other words, so I heard his mother voice through the telephone, "You see Belle is a better son than you. He's not going to leave his family." Yes, and this woman by the name of Rachael, or Rochel, Rachel Yashpan, she was in the concentration camp in Stutthof, and I met her after the war near Rio de Janeiro. She could not come to Palestine for certain reasons. So we were expecting somebody is going to happen, and it happened very quickly. I remember from this only two or three things. One, it come to us, I would call them a gang of five or six people, people from the street. People with guns or with half-guns or something and they took us to the back yard -- not the back yard but to the -- you know, all the houses were a big place around, so they took us and when we come down, we were living the third floor, we show all the Jewish families in the house. It means that 90 -- 99 percent except the Gentile are staying in a line and the people come to take us are staying against us with guns and we was very frightened, except when he put, one of them, a young guy put his gun against me. So I remember my mother told me, "If you turn now he will not harm you. He knows that you are a good boy." And they told us they had seen the Jewish people are working against the Germans and against the Lithuanian partisans. They called themselves partisans. So, I don't know what happened but we were released to our houses. When we come to the house we have seen that in my daddy's table, he has his own table for writing, what do you call it shaipdish (ph), so he was missing his golden box for cigarettes. So, maybe this was their excuse to come here or to release us, I don't know. I don't remember. I remember another thing. I remember the same day we heard in the radio the first order in Lithuanian language, "Nobody is to go out and nobody is to take arms," and so on. What each army is doing when it's coming into an occupied area, but one, I think it was the last paragraph there, was for each German soldier will be shot, it will be shot 100 Jewish people signed by Colonel Bobyalous (ph), the commandant of Kovno, Kaunas. He was appointed right now. And now, let me tell you the same, a year ago when I visited Lithuania as a member of a delegation from the Knesset I met in the parliament the son of Mr. Bobyalous, head of

the committee of defense and foreign affairs. And he should be my host to take me so I avoided twice to shake hands with him, and I didn't.

Q: That's ironic.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

- Q: We were talking about how -- what was going on when the Nazis occupied Lithuania, occupied Kovno. As I understand it, there was a tremendous amount of chaos, certainly in the beginning. People were being beaten, killed, taken out. I don't know if this was something that you saw or experienced?
- A: Something I saw through the window, and I avoided such things to see, naturally, and I saw through the window, for instance, that a young man is going on the street, and somebody is arresting him or holding him. This young man took from his pocket a certain paper and showed it to the others -- no I think they told him to go back. He refused. That I understood from his movements, and they showed a certain paper maybe it was -- he got it from the Germans, or he worked for somebody already, so they become very angry and took him by the two sides and arrested him. And what makes me very bad feelings is that all the crowds on the streets, they are trying to make a lynch of him. So, then I felt it's not only the Germans, but everybody enemy to each Jew, even to people who were not Communists, who were not part of the Soviet government. It's enough to be a Jew. So, for instance, my grandfather, I came to visit him because he was living in the more quieter neighborhood than mine, so my parents decided we are living maybe too much in the center of the city, so it's more dangerous so let's go to the grandfather. The Grandfather was living on a small street called Nomonu (ph) Street, Nomonu 14, I think, and everything was very quiet. It was a garden on the corner, very idealistic, very quiet, and some day came a Lithuanian, civilian Lithuanian with a rifle and come to see. So, he told that he is running after people to work, taking them to work. That was a daily habit. Jewish people were taken to work. It was part of a _____ to work or to making them work -- it was part of making them that everybody can see them in bad situation, the Jewish people. That, for instance, an old man has to go with two chairs. He's in the middle of the street and everybody is going and beating him and so on and so on. So, it was much more than only physical work. So, once such man with a rifle come to take my old, old grandfather to work. My grandfather refused. So, he even didn't talk to him Lithuanian. My grandfather asked me to tell him that he's too old. So, he told me that he will take him by force. So, the grandfather told me to tell him that nothing will help, and they can't take him. So, nothing will -- we will not go. And my grandfather has experience from World War I that I knew also with all the gangs in Russia when they were deported to Russia by the Czars in the -- during the revolution that each gang who come -- occupies a certain city took people and arrested them sometimes he cruel to them, so, he had very, very good experience of life. I would not say good, but rich, let's say. So, he refused, and what happened, in a certain moment I saw two German soldiers are coming with a Lithuanian guy. Afterwards I was told that a neighbor from the same building saw that the old and very distinguished Mr. Dovid Levin is taken by such a hooligan, to work, he was very shocked. So far, that her apartment where two German soldiers were put to live there -- it happened in all houses. It was a custom that in each house had to take some soldiers and they were living there. She said, "Look they are going to take this old man to work." So, they come and saved him. That was very -- I was

very impressed by this. Soldiers, but not Gestapo and not other soldiers. A private or a corporal.

Q: All this people that were taken out every day to work, were they really being taken out to work?

A: No. Sometimes they were taken to only to what I told you, like with the chairs. But what's more important is that some, a big part of them didn't come home. They were taken to the Seventh Fort, to the prison, to another place, murdered. The woman or girls were raped before and afterwards murdered, or by shooting or with knives and so on and so on.

Q: Now how did you get information? How did you know this was happening -- at the time, not what you learned later?

A: I learned it later. It could be a day later even because some of these girls told us how they escaped, they were saved. I remember a name Ella Volpe (ph). Ella Volpe. She was also in my age, about 15 1/2, a nice looking girl. She told us when she was in this fortress, Number 7 or Number 4, I don't remember this, but the other woman took water with sand and put on her face so she will look like an ugly or a handicapped woman or old woman so nobody will hurt her. That I remember.

Q: Did it work?

A: Yes. So, she told us you know it was very inconvenient to examine her.

Q: The people who were taken to the forts and killed, how did you get information about that? How did you know what was happening?

A: As this girl, also others were released -- small, small part, I would say ten, fifteen percent, no more, and they told us very horrible stories. I remember one of them that they were thirsty, so the Lithuanian guardsmen, also they called himself partisans, he told them, "If you bring me money I'll let you go to have a water from a swamp, or maybe another place also for water." So, they went and on the way they were shoot. I heard also that one of our teachers, former teachers, by the name Goldman, he committed -- he fight back. He told them very hard words, and they shoot him after he showed that he is going to defend himself. That's what I remember from these times.

Q: Do you know who was responsible for these massacres? Was it Nazis, was it Lithuanians?

A: Lithuanians.

Q: Einsatzgruppen (ph)?

- A: The word Einsatzgruppen we didn't heard at the time. We have seen only that usually on each group of Lithuanians who are going to murder or make operation for action, it they called aktzion (ph), were one or two Germans, so the proportion was one two eight, one to ten. I don't know exactly, but the daily work usually did the Lithuanians except that when we come to the ghetto, it was the 15th of August 1944, so there were the beginning hautios (ph), and the huge population everybody has to deliver everything of money, gold, silver, and other jewels. So, that was done only by German police force. They were also very cruel. They maybe have good -- in their towns they have good training how to do this. Shoot people in order to frighten the others. So, this was done only by Germans, not Lithuanians.
- Q: They did not trust the Lithuanians for that.
- A: Yes, I think you are right. Yes.
- Q: Well, let's talk about the ghetto. How did you happen to get sent to the ghetto? How did you get there? Were you able to take things? Was it -- how did this transformation come about?
- A: First at all, it's funny but it was a good news that we are coming to the ghetto. Because the feeling was that in the ghetto we will be preserved. Probably. We will be only Jewish people maybe it will stop all the -- these horrible things, to catch people on the streets, in the houses and to kill them etc. So, there we will work, we will do what happened in Poland, so that is and maybe we can survive the war, maybe. So it was good feeling. A good feeling. A good feeling this time, better than before. So, we had to look after a place in the ghetto. The ghetto was in Slobotka, the same suburbs, Slobotka, and it was done by two ways. Or that everybody chose a place and they made exchange with the Lithuanian or Polish family who were living there, or to get such a place from the Jewish Committee. Meanwhile there was the Jewish Committee which become afterwards, the Judenrat. We didn't know in this time all the names of the famous people, but we were in connections with the level of officers, working in the offices of this Committee, and they gave us places. We have to go to the ghetto and we could take everything, everything, and I remember from Kovno to Slobotka were a very, very, very long line of vehicles with everything. Sometimes also furnitures, and the Jewish had something in the houses. Everything you went to the ghetto, and it was before the house search, so the Germans couldn't find concentrated, they have not to go from house to house in Kovno. I remember an episode that we come to the Lithuanian family talking about the exchange, so the it happened that we also had to give them some money. My father didn't have more money, so he took out the cover of the table, it was a very expensive of a very good linen, with colorful and so on and gave her so, "Here you have it." I became very sensitive in this time and if I want to cry, because it was for me a very situation of helpless. So, I interfered and told this lady, "Look, you took our -- most of our furniture, most everything, you have to know how to keep it." That was my - that I remember very good.

She looked at me and cried also she. I was going to cry, she cried, but she took. And --

Q: Before when you were talking about all the vehicles lined up to get into the ghetto, can you tell me more of what this looked like? And was it organized? Did it feel organized or crazy?

A: No, it was not so organized, but I felt like gypsies are moving, such views we have seen before, but not so much. It was four kilometers, four miles we see moving and moving and going and going, and without an end. And people were looking in the streets. For me it was interesting how is their reaction. Pity or the opposite, so as I remember it was not pity. If it was so it was only several, so I was very impressed by this, by remorse, not. It was like raining, it should be rain, so everybody is going in this way.

Q: Now, did you initially live in the small ghetto or the larger ghetto?

A: I was in the beginning, living in the small ghetto at a small street called Shiluvos (ph). And it was right by the fence, by the fence. I can remember that every morning when I arose, I could see the Lithuanian, so-called partisan, looking through the window, or through the fence to us, and some of our neighbors -- they put us together, it was lack of space, they put several families together. His name was Beltz (ph). It was a Russian Jew, Alexander Beltz (ph), a very tall man, a strong man. So, he went to the soldier, the man who guard, and began to talk to him, make a deal. "Look, why not you can not bring us some vegetables, something." I don't know what they did, but it was some of the people began to try to see, maybe it was a examination, what he's answering, because we were also frightened of them. Some of them were shooting in the middle of the day, middle of the night, shooting in the windows. Not, for nothing. It was their power and they could do what they want, when they want.

Q: Who were you living with? What part of your family, all of your family?

A: Yes, at this time, all of my family. With my father Hirshel, my mother Bluma, and my sister Batya or Basya. We were living together with this old pair. Old, maybe today I'm older than he was, Mr. Alexander Beltz, and I remember that they were talking about their daughter. She escaped. "Has she reached the Soviet's country or not?" he says. "Or not?" Probably she left with her finance or with her husband or with a boyfriend. Maybe he was not Jewish. That I don't remember, but this was one of the things that people were talking about in these times. Many of them come back -- come back after they were not allowed to come in the Soviet border. Or some were stopped by local gangs, bombers, something happened. So nobody -- we knew only who come back or who was killed on the way, somebody watched him. But who reached, nobody knows. That I remember. We are talking about now as a father of children, I am very -- I understand it more, so if I could not do, maybe my child will be saved, so it's also good feeling, that I remember this episode. And it was door exits, same small building another door were living a big family about twelve or fifteen people. It was not original family, but some survivors, relatives.

Their family was Grodnik (ph). Grodnik. I knew one of them, in my age more or less, his name was Baruch (ph), or and we called him Boroch (ph). Afterwards he come with me to the partisans and now he is living in -- near Aco (ph), Acres, in Israel. His father was, some of his sisters, sister-in-law, many, many women. I understood that the males were taken away before, or escaped to Russia. It happened in many families there. That already, it was luck of males because also in the fortress, a very certain part of the women were released, after what happened there. The biggest part of the males were shot there, or in the streets. Or they went away. So I think that most -- it was a very, very characteristic amount of a family, or so-called family. That many young women with one old man, the father of my friend, and him. And they were also from several places. Not everybody were from Kovno. They are moving, some of were coming from the small shtetl Kovno, maybe there is more safe. Others were going from Kovno to other shtetl, village, maybe there is more safe. And so on and so on. So, in Kovno what we could find it's people -- it was not the original population of Kovno. I would say that 20 percent were newcomers or already refugees, from other shtetlach.

Q: Can you talk about what the ghetto looked like? How -- were you -- was it very restricted, could you go in and out?

A: Inside the ghetto, yes. But, I remember that we have -- because it was the small ghetto was very narrow and we avoid to go near the fence, so we made some holes between one court to another, or small entrance by putting out part of the fence between the court. And that made us a possibility also to go at night, because at night it was prohibitted to go. Yeah. I remember another thing, also from this house my mother sent me to one of my uncles, this Moses Levin, that maybe it's more safe there. And I remember that at night, in the evenings, all the people come together like meeting, like in a club and were are talking, lighting a cigarette, and talking, talking, what they were talking? I remember a lady which was a year before in France and told how the French people received the Germans there, the German soldiers. Another told about his experience in the Soviet factory -- before he was an employee in their store. And the Soviets come and told him, "That's not an occupation for a young man, go to work in a factory." And he -- they were working according numbers and who is making the number it's enough. I remember the results.

Q: How -- but you were allowed to meet in groups? The Germans weren't threatened by that?

A: No, the Germans didn't come in the ghetto usually. Only when they came that it was something, so everybody would hide in the town and not showing himself or trying to be very small that nobody can watch you.

Q: So, you were surrounded by fences but sometimes you made holes in the fences so that you could move around a little?

A: Yes, but from one house to another house, but not from the fence outside.

Q: There were fences between the houses?

A: Yes, like, it was a neighborhood of a suburb, many gardens, so there was a fence between one garden and another, that was.

Q: So, they tried prevent you from even communicating from your next door neighbor?

A: No, they didn't. No.

Q: Why a fence between every house? I'm confused.

A: Yeah but before the war there were fences, natural fences, like you can see in each city, that is a suburbs they are living like in a village, like a cultural village so everybody has around his house a fence.

Q: Was there ever a way to get out of the ghetto, itself?

A: Not, not, not at all. Even to go close to the fence, and now I'm talking about the fence with, not iron, but how do you call it, with the needles --

Q: An electric -- barbed wire?

A: Not electric, no, no.

Q: Barbed wire?

A: Wire, yes, but not electric. Electric, this were afterwards, yeah. But it was enough because each ten or fifteen meters should stayed another partisan with a gun and only looking for a victim. Yeah, but in order to go in the other side of the ghetto we have to cross the bridge and there also it was not convenient to do it because there were also a Jewish policemen, so we were not afraid of him, but also a Lithuanian armed guy. So when we went to the other side of the ghetto, so according the small ghetto, it was a big city.

Q: And you couldn't go freely? I'm confused, you couldn't go freely to the large ghetto?

A: We could, but it was not very convenient to meet this armed Lithuanian with a uniform of the old Lithuanian army.

Q: But he would let you through?

A: Yes, but he could do everything, you know.

Q: He could be temperamental?

A: No, he could --

Q: He could kill you if he felt like it?

A: Yes, to find an excuse to do it or without an excuse.

Q: To do what?

A: To shoot me, to beat me, to do me everything. So, I didn't, for me it was very difficult to look at him even. So I avoid to meet them.

Q: What about the organization within the ghetto, the sort of political structure?

A: Political, eh...

Q: Well, you had an administrative structure, maybe that's a better way. You had a Judenrat, you had a Jewish police. Tell me a little bit about how these people got selected, who were they? Who served in these capacities?

A: I can tell you only what I have seen, in these times I have seen Jewish policemen, and I was told -- so I remember that when we come to the ghetto it should be one or two days before the 15th of August 1941. We found already Jewish police there. Some of them were occupied by helping to build the fence and some of them were also staying and working some places, the lines. The lines of the stores. There were special stores for Jewish people, already in the city of Kovno, so maybe they are moved to the ghetto. Anyway, there were certain places to deliver food, very small homes, very small at the beginning of the ghetto. So, you can feel, I could feel that somebody is -- we knew that it is a committee so that we can feel that someone is taking care, or delivering food. Somebody has to do it. And also, the policemen are, they must have more higher degrees of commanders and so on, so we knew that it is a certain organization which is responsible for the ghetto and this 100 percent Jewish. But we didn't know how much they can decide, how long, how far. That we couldn't do. I remember that one day it was Yom Kippur when many people were praying so we saw that from, he is coming a Jewish man, his name is Luria (ph), Luria, and he's telling, "Look we know you are going to pray. It's very important for you, maybe also for us, but what's more important is you have stopped to do it and everybody who is in a certain age," he tell them, "You have to come and to work very, very urgent, because Germans demand I don't know how many thousands or so many Jewish workers for their war effort." Maybe he told us the aerodromes (ph), the airports. "And you have to do it, I'm sorry that I have to interrupt you." So, he went from one to another, from one place to another and people really stopped pray except the old people or what the kids and went to the work. I don't know if

the Germans did it special for Yom Kippur or maybe for them it wasn't -- they did it from their point of view, but that's what happened. So we couldn't understand that this man, everybody shout, "That's Luria," he was, before the war he was a judge. A judge it -- we had not many Jewish judges in Lithuania, so maybe it was one or two, so he was very authoritative, he were talking in language of orders, explained very short, that is so, we understood that it's from the Committee. We called it a committee, the word Elderstrat (ph), we didn't know yet, but bit by bit we knew it and we have to -- we came to see also the house. It was in the middle of the ghetto, the big ghetto. It was a brown house, two floors, but we didn't call not this Elderstrat, and not Judenrat, but the Comitet (ph), in Yiddish. Comitet, it means committee. Even till the end. On the other hand, on their announcements, the papers, it was signed Elderstrat or Chairman of the Elderstrat, so and so, or Secretary of the Elderstrat, so bit by bit we understand also this term, and I remember that in the house of the staff, it was two floors, in one room was a certain -- on a door was hanging a certain announcement, Va'ad (ph) in Hebrew, Va'ad Ziknei Ha'Eidah (ph), it's old name for the Eldest of Zion. So the eldest of the community it's a paraphrase, so in Yiddish Elderstart and also in German and maybe also in Lithuanian, I saw it. So, bit by bit we knew that this was the same thing.

Q: Did you know any of these people who formed the Consul of Elders or Committee?

A: Yes, we knew it bit by bit. Nobody come and told us, "You know, we have a committee from this day and so on and so on," but we knew, of course we knew Dr. Elkous, the name. We knew Yaakov Goldberg, we knew Rabbi Shmulker (ph) and maybe others knew more. I was only a youngster at this time, so for me it was enough also three or four names, but I knew very much that they are having the rule inside the ghetto. They are delivering places to work, or jobs, better places, worse places and in order to get a good place, you must have what you could -- what you called protection. Protectzia (ph), of protectzieh (ph), in Yiddish. It means to be protected or known by the people who are delivering the works in order to get a better one.

Q: How did you get protection?

A: It's protection not in the word of a mafia, but if I know that one of the people is working in the office of work, Arbeitsamt (ph), or he was my teacher before or maybe a neighbor or maybe a friend or relative somehow, so go to him and ask him, "Here I am, and it's very hard for me to work in this lousy places. Please give me another one." And so, it happened that some people were working very hard, some people less, and what's important that the people who were working hard even could not, or have the possibilities to buy something, or change food for clothes, or clothes for food. So, if bad is bad at all, if it's good, it's better at all -- more or less everything.

Q: Now, some of the names you mentioned like Dr. Elkous, Mr. Goldberg, did you -- what was your feeling about these people? Did you feel they were taking good care of you? Did you feel that because they were having to answer to the Nazis that maybe they

weren't so good? What was your attitude about this committee and about the Jewish police also?

A: When we are talking in the beginning of the ghetto, we feel that we are together in one bad position, and we didn't know what we knew afterwards. So, maybe who didn't get a good job were more opposed, and the others was more pro, but we didn't know that we can expect critical, or vital decisions from the Committee, or the Elderstrat. They can only execute orders, this time.

Q: Do you remember what you -- did you have an opinion of them at the time? Did you think they were helping you? Did you trust them?

A: More than the opposite.

Q: Did you know any of them personally, other than just knowing their name?

A: No, I didn't know any of them, nobody.

Q: Now, you were living in the small ghetto, and very early in the life of the ghetto, the small ghetto was liquidated, correct? Where were you and can you tell me what happened?

A: Yes, it was called also aktzion, not the first one. So, we were told to move in a certain direction and it was to where the big ghetto, the Great Ghetto, and at a certain place they made a selection. I don't remember where, probably at the bridge. I don't -- that I don't remember, because I was in such situations I -- when I cannot help myself I become very introverted, introverted, till now. But when I decide to do something this other thing. So I cannot remember. I remember only one thing, that we moved everybody, all four families, four of my family, we crossed the ghetto together with my friend Bora Grodnik (ph). He was very upset because he left -- he lost his father. His father was with a beard, elderly man, maybe also younger than me today, he lost him and he understood what is the meaning of losing. So he was very upset, but kept himself. And when we crossed on the other side of the ghetto, we come in in the first house of the street on the other side and come into a Jewish family to rest or something, or to -- I don't know. They leave, they left -- they allowed us to come in. Maybe somebody -- they gave us maybe water or tea, I don't remember, something. I remember even the name. The name was Sefer (ph), Sefer. The head of the family was a policeman. But it was done like solidarity of Jewish people. "Something happened, come in, live, relax," and so on. After this, I don't remember how we found another flat, apartment. That I don't know, but I know that after we were put in another house of the street, Linkura (ph) or Linkuvos (h), yeah, number 56 together with other families in a wooden house. The house is still staying, one floor, a wooden house, and there was our house all the time that the whole family were living together in the ghetto.

Q: It must have been crowded?

A: Yeah, yeah. Many families together and at least we got -- yes we got one room and a half of a kitchen together with a family of three men. I forgot now their names. They came from Memille (ph), and they were talking between them German. We knew them before because when my father used to go to this area of Memille-Gebeit (ph), it means the German part of Lithuania. He was staying in a hotel called Shvartze Adler (ph), the Black Eagle, so he was one of the owners, his wife and a small child. The relations were not good. It beacuse first the kitchen, afterwards also the mess -- we didn't become friends. And they were living with us until the big action in October 28. And the night after they didn't come back, so we earned, earned their place so now we had one room, a small room, but only we, and more than half kitchen, I think, two thirds of a kitchen. Yes. Davidowitz maybe was their name.

Q: Did you -- when you were forced out of the small ghetto, when you were forced out of the small ghetto, I know that the hospital was burned. Were you aware of this? Could you see this? What was happening?

A: I saw this but I didn't believe.

Q: Tell me what you saw.

A: I saw a smoke. It was at the same time when all the Jewish from the Small ghetto were taken to a big piatza (ph), or place. And after staying there half a day, we were all released to go home. It was cold in the ghetto. That -- it was like it's a repetition of action. Repetition, yes? Repetiton. It means to try how it works and there were many rumors why the Council did this action, or maybe, I don't know. Anyway, this time we come back we have seen a big smoke, and there was a rumor that this was hospital. But I could not -- I couldn't understand that somebody is going to burn -- we didn't heard any voices. I remember even now them -- two floors, the color, it was yellow or white, or cream white of the -- of this building. So, there were rumors afterwards I heard they were burned and everything, but at the beginning I didn't want not to believe, because there were many rumors, and certain types of the rumors were not true. So, I also didn't receive this rumor, so I was not very much touched of this, what I have seen, smoke is smoke. Only afterwards I was told and we also get the detailed information, but it took us several days.

Q: So, what had happened?

A: Nothing, nothing happened.

Q: I mean, what was burning? I need you to tell me. Were there people?

A: It was a hospital. I don't know if the staff or the part of the staff and probably all of the

patients including children were burned there. That I -- maybe I heard this the same day, but I think that I didn't believe, maybe also it's my nature to escape from the reality.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

- Q: Where we stopped, you are now living in the large ghetto, and I know you were there for a while. What was life like there? Was there any semblance of normal activity? How -- did kids go to school? Did you observe Jewish holidays? Were people working? What was going on?
- A: I was living after we were expelled from the small ghetto, in what we call the Great Ghetto, it wasn't so great, but, I think we were about -- I was two and half years, two years, or two years -- two and half years, yes. So, in the two and a half years in ghetto, what we call now the Big Ghetto -- at the beginning I remember that we when we have leisure time, and we have some after the work, or it was a time I should not to go to work, because I was not 17 years. So, I found a certificate from my high school with a picture of me that I was born this and this year, this and this month. It means 27 of January 1925, it means that till 27th January 1942, I have not to go to work, because it was the beginning --17 years is the beginning of the first work. So, sometimes I did, I went to work instead of other people who paid me. And such arrangement was called, I don't know why, a malach (ph). A malach, it's in Hebrew or Yiddish, angel, and I was told that it was used during the period of the Czars that people were afterward with the Army and others could replace them for money, so I did it, and so I could help a little bit my family, myself.
- Q: What kind of work?
- A: Oh, work, usually very hard work, field work, or buildings, and we have to under the sky -- it means outside the houses, it was winter. We were not -- it was very not convenient, unconvenient is also, I wouldn't say the whole truth, in water, in raining, in snowing, in cold, and not eaten. We were very hungry all the time, to be in the fresh air, young men, so it was no good. So, anyway, to coming back to your first question, several times we went when I had time to go around the ghetto -- not around but in the center -- like to making a walk with friends or girlfriends. So, some places in the ghetto became like a promenade . And as I remember it was around the building of the Elderstrat, or the Comitet. Why? Because there come many people to -- for their business. To get another job, or to move in another house, or to ask for protection, so people met many people there. It was a concentration of people, a big crowd. Some of them were talking politics and they were asking for news or talking -- telling or listening for rumors, and there were many, many rumors, good and bad. So, it was a place to coming and I remember also in this times people like to be dressed also well. Not as the time when they went to work, so the impression was that people like to be normal as they can. I remember also during these times it was the beginning of people who were selling some candies, some other things, homemade or other, and that was the beginning of a bigger production of such things in the ghetto. No, the beginning was cigarettes, people need cigarettes, especially in such a time of tension. I think that also I begin to smoke. It was a need, or a fashion, I don't remember well. Anyway, we tried to be more and more -- like to be normal. In

these times I began also to keep a diary. The beginning I was writing the headline "Divrei Ha'Yamim" (ph). Divrei Ha'Yamim, its means the events of the days. There is also in the Bible there is such a name of -- Chronicles it's called or something, so I -- the first I did note all the events was happened with us, with our family, or with the people of the small ghetto from the beginning of the war till now, and I put also daydreams. I don't remember about school, maybe it was a school, maybe not, because I was in high school, and high school anyway was not in ghetto, but I heard that there are people who are -- not people but youngsters, younger than me, they are attending to schools, and I am not missing too much because I was -- according for my age I have not to go to school. So I was -- I should be at the age between school and college, let's say. That's it. But on your question, on the spirit of your question, I remember that people liked and also me, to be nice dressed more or less when you came outside the house. Even we were in the middle of atrocities. That I remember.

Q: Would -- when you say you tried to make life normal, what other ways? What other things did you do so that you'd feel that in the in the midst of all this you still had some enjoyment, or some control of your lives?

A: Oh, the control of our lives, that was to eat, to eat on the table, even though it hungry to use a knife and a spoon, and a thing what we had to. And you greet people on the street, and behave more or less as free people, not as prisoners. Because prisoners have to go on the right side of the street, and we had also to greet the German soldiers and of course the officers. So we -- and even to make nice our stars that we have to wore on -- here and on the back, in the same place on the back. So, I remember that people had made it from yellow paper but some did it very nice on all their robes, some of silken and some made it either nice form, bit by bit, so it was a steady form. Afterwards, the Germans decided should be very uniformal, that you cannot do what you want, it should be a special size and so on, but that I remember the trend, to do what we can.

Q: To maintain dignity?

A: Yes. I don't know -- dignity, this I don't know nobody thinking, but normal.

Q: No, but you're talking about people taking some -- instead of just putting any yellow star on, that they attempted to personalize it?

A: Yes, as part of their guardaroba (ph), I would say.

Q: What other things did you do to pretend this is a normal life? What did you enjoy? Was there music? Did you have a social life?

A: Yes. The social life was to meet old friends from the class, or from the youth movements, or new girls and from time to time there were also parties. Some people were keeping patiphones. Patiphones its means records or the aparatus. And dancing or singing or --

and also they worked up this new pairs, from a young boy and a young girl, or it was a continuation from before the ghetto, or they are beginning a newer one. So --

Q: Did you have a girlfriend at the time?

A: Not yet, after that. I have some. I would say all, or a big part of my sister's girlfriends were very close to me. Same company more or less. After that I had another one till the end of the ghetto, and when I went to the forests, in the end of -- when was it? The end of 1944, in March, I gave her to keep my diary. And till now, I don't know what happened to it. Maybe one day it can be found.

Q: Were there regular aktzions in the ghetto?

A: Regular?

Q: Did you normally feel safe, or --

A: Till the big action, or the Great Action which occurred 28th of October 1941, so were many, so nobody was sure what would happen the evening. I remember that this time, I remember this chapter in the Bible that it will be a time when in the morning you wish it to be evening and evening morning. That I remember. Yeah. I was thinking about this sentence. But after the big action, so life become more stable and there were no more such horrible actions, there were deportations. Deportations it's very inconvenient, very bad, maybe for hard work. It's not -- it was not surely for deaths. Many people died there, but it happened not direct. So what I was afraid is to be caught to dirty walk. Dirty it's means not dirty aesthetical, but in a bad place of a walk. For instance, on the aerodrome, airport. So there you are walking hard, many hours you have to go, I would say maybe five miles each side by foot, and you have to go and sometime to run because it's a very long, Cologne is going on the way, and some are going fast and some not so. The Germans who are watching press that we have to make altogether to go. And what I didn't like was to go and to see the people on the streets. They were so happy I would say or glad, how we are looking and then we were looking bad, very bad.

Q: The Lithuanian people?

A: Yes, there was about 90 percent of Kovno. Maybe some were Polish, I don't know. But the man in the street. That I could not stand. With the Germans we knew before that that is, we were expecting more or less a bad relation. But the others with whom we grew up together. So, that was terrible for me, and I -- certain time I worked inside the ghetto as a helper of a craftsman in the internal fac -- it wasn't a factory, but a workshop, a workshop. So, he was a very old 0carpenter, this man, and we heard about him even before. He was running a factory of furniture, he and his family, so I become his second or third driver, assistant. He was not very happy about me because I have -- at this time my hands were not the best and when I have to do something, so I made it not in the best

way. Anyway, I worked beyond a roof, it was winter so it was not so bad and it was warm there because we took the rest of the wood and put it the stove. At home, it was worse. At home we had no wood enough, so sometimes we could -- we took the fences from around the house and put this in the oven or even furnitures. After they were finished, so I prepared to go outside the house all the time, what I can, and only to come in the afternoon, later afternoon, then to have my meal, what's the meal was usually a soup, each time a soup. In this soup they took everything they could, my mother, in our house it was pieces of bread, potatoes, some grasses, of course water, put together with a little salt and that was the dinner, so-called dinner. After the dinner we went to other houses to listen to songs. Or in certain time, I began to take part in the meetings of a new stage of the underground, of Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair. It was not far from my house, and that was also a turning point for me. The beginning we were talking of every kind of socialism, democratic socialism, or radical socialism, theoretical things, and what we have to do after the war and what is the best way to become democratic, or undemocratic, many theoretical things. I remember that I prepared also a paper that say of one guy, Franz Oppenheimer (ph). Franz Oppenheimer. He was a sociologist. So, I brought it and read it or talked it to my other friends, the _____ of Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair, and I remember I was shouting, "Yes I can see immediately that it's not -- it was anti-socialist, this man." He was probably a social democrat or something so it was not good for Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair that they were still very left. But one day or night, come to me one of the friends of the people there, Gita Poger, and she told me, "I would like to talk to you very secretly. You know we are meeting here, we are talking about political theories. That was good for before war, now we have to do something else. What does it mean? I will not say you but somebody will talk to you and you have to keep it very secretly. Not to tell even not your father, not your mother, not your sister." I promised. Another time come to me somebody, it was her, and with another girl and she told me, "Now we there will be a cell. I am the commander of the cell and you the both, the two, are members. I will give you orders and you have to fullfill it and also not to -- even if you are thinking of another of Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair is also involved in these things, you have not to talk with them about this." So every time she come with new orders. One day she come and demand that you have to bring her many empty bottles, and here and there and other things. And what was the most dramatical thing that one day she comes with part of a rifle. I don't know what it is in English, but it's the part of that -- the shooting part before you have to push it and pull it and everything. I forgot the English name, because I was never a English soldier. So it was -- and she brought it in an old newspaper. It was very dangerous, you know, that if for a piece of jewelry, jewel, you could be arrested and shot, so that was even dangerous not only for me but for the whole neighborhood. That I remember till today and I am meeting her all the time and I remember, "You, you was my hero. I was admiring you how you are doing this." And bit by bit we also have lessons telling you how to shoot, only theoretical and topography and about first aid, how to give, and how to make estimations of distances and a little Judo and many things. Until we heard that the Wilno Ghetto is liquidated and then we also had also newspapers written by hand that -- I remember that some of the words was the order of the U.P.O., the United Partisans Organization in Wilno, or the first proclamation or the other, it was

included in our newspaper. So, it was very, very important for me, for us, to hear such things. If they can do it, maybe we can do it also. So, we were very encouraged from this. You must understand that nobody know -- we were closed like in a zoo. And here is something talking about, resistance, really resistance, not only to sing songs and encourage each other. So, it was very important to us and didn't tell no to nobody.

Q: I want to ask you a few questions. You mentioned that you were taught various things, about first aid or topography or theoretically how to shoot. Who taught you?

A: Everybody "she." This nice girl.

Q: So the women were very involved in these underground activities?

A: She brought it from others.

Q: But it was -- but were men and women equally involved in all of this?

A: Yes, yes, of course.

Q: I want you to say that.

A: The fact is that in the population of the ghetto, in our neighborhood, in our house, also in the organization and the most of the members were not males, but females, girls. Yeah, girls, they were very young, so we can call them girls. So, it was very natural that in such a cell there was one man, if I am, I hope, with two girls. And I didn't ask questions why. It didn't matter me. She's my major in this thing and I have very willingly to do all of this, her orders.

Q: You don't know how she learned how to --

A: No, I didn't ask. No.

Q: I'm wondering if the Jewish police in the ghetto gave any assistance to your organizations?

A: Yes, the Jewish police did it, but I don't remember in which stage. I know, but not -- I don't remember, those are two things. It was at time for instance in 26th of October 1943, for me it was a critical day, because I lost my family this days. It was deportation to Estonia. At that morning, I -- the ghetto was closed. Nobody went to work outside the ghetto and I got mission, a certain mission to go in another place, to say a parole, a certain parole, I think that I remember the parole, and they sent me again in another place. When they sent me, it was the beginning already of the deportation. And when I passed my home, my building where we were living, our residence, I saw that a truck staying near the house and Jewish police and others, I don't remember who, maybe

Lithuanian, or Estonian, or German are coming to take my family. I was passing very close let's say about ten, fifteen meters. They have seen me, I have seen them. My sister was very crying, very crying. My father was saying, in a position, or in a stride, "Everything is lost." He saw me and made such (gesturing). He didn't say it, but, "What we can do?" Only my mother she make me a strong wink with her eye. It means, "Go away!" and that was very, very important for me because yesterday the 26th of October was 51 years after this day, and I was thinking if she would not do it, maybe I would become again a good son and join the family where they are going. Because I didn't expect that they will be taken, and why? Because several days before, this my commander come to me and asking me, "I would like to know the names of your father, your mother, and your sister and others in your family and the name of the identity cards, number," and so on. Maybe she told me or I understood that the families of the underground people will be defended. So, when I saw that also they are taking I was shocked. I was shocked, shocked twice, so maybe this agreement that maybe was done with the Elderstrat, with the authorities through the ghetto, didn't work, or maybe another thing, so that's a puncture. To think that my family they are taken so what makes the decision for me to go further, was this movement by the eye, a wink to the eye of my mother, that mother, Bluma Levin, born in Wigoda. She did it and it give me a motivation to go farther and even not to look back. So, I went to the place I have to go. It was in a certain building. It was called Blocktzai (ph), means Blocktzey (ph). And there I had to say a certain parole. "I want" -- the parole was, "I want to sleep here at night." In Yiddish it (speaking Yiddish), so the answer was, I don't remember, but now I'm coming to the your main question, I put it already together that in this day -- before this house was staying a policeman, his name was Daniel Billard (ph). He was a known policeman because before the war he was a very known box-man. Maybe he asking me the question or another man, so then I realized that the police or at least a part of the police is working in cooperation with the -- with the underground. That makes me also a good feeling. And afterwards, I was told to go to the cellar. I went -- a cellar. After I come to the cellar, they opened a door on the ground -- no the ground was with ashes or something or small stones. So, somebody took away the stones and told me to, "Go there." I fell. I think that I fell. So, I remember that some hands catched me and pulled me down and what it was dark, dark, very dark. I can only fell --only see some fires of cigarettes. Very in silence, every half an hour was an order, move here, move there, or who wants to eat, who wants to go to the toilets. I don't know which -- I don't remember which arrangements they made. Who wants to smoke, who wants drink. One like with a chain. I am telling them and he is telling the other and so on and so on and a certain moment we felt that a noise, anoise, and somebody knocking on the iron cover of the cellar, "Ta, ta, ta, ta, ta," and people are calling and answering, maybe they are going to catch us and somebody telled them. They are still looking for people for deportation because in this day, many were hiding with me, but we made it an organized form. So, I felt myself better. I don't remember if somebody had arms or not, but I felt so secure and so good that somebody is taking care on me. And really, after a few minutes, everything settled maybe and silent again. We were not -- I don't know because I don't remember if I looked of -- in my watch. I have yet my watch. My watch that I get -- I received as a bar mitzvah. And when

we had to come out it was already evening. In October the evening began early like now. And we were told that now everybody is going for a while with family, "You are free but you have to come back very soon. Maybe this night we are leaving the ghetto." Leaving the ghetto, it means to the forest. I become again very happy. So, I went to home, home was empty without people, without my parents, without my sister, nothing. And I have seen that some -- the neighbors, next door neighbors of my family by the name of Feen (ph) they were very surprised to see me, "How come you back?" because they were sure if my family was taken so also me. And they gave me some to eat and to drink. We were not in the best relations, but now we become very close. But I realize that many things are not in the same place, so maybe my family took it, or maybe they took it, I don't know. But it was for me -- I didn't care because if I are leaving the ghetto this night it's for me all the same, and I took some sandwiches they gave me. I didn't tell them, but I told them that I will not more live here in this place. I'm going away. Maybe they understood, maybe not. And when I come back to the place of concentration, it was in another hiding place on Stesbolyu (ph) so we were told that this night nothing will happened and we have to stay. We have to stay, so we decide to not to go more home. Because what's home? Home without parents is no home, or sister, no home. So, I was not the only one who was in such a situation. There were more, three, four, five, six. I don't remember. So, we stayed in the same place and we sleep in the same place. We made arrangements to sleep. It was not in a cellar but under a roof of a small building. So, it was space for everybody and actually this was the beginning of a collective or a kibbutz, if you want, of a part of a members of Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair and the others. Collective or kibbutz I don't remember the name but that was the reality.

- Q: Now you said there was just a handful of you there? I'm trying to get a sense of how many people were together at this point?
- A: I think 25 but not everybody were left without parents. Some of them prepared to be there together. You know, the feeling to be together it make also the people stronger. Together, together, only to be, to be. Now only some hours ago we were saved together, now we will live together. Maybe we will have to go to the forest together. Nobody knows.
- Q: I just want to go back to one thing that you said when you learned that the policeman was aware of all of the -- or was aware of some of the activities and probably was helping. What was -- do you remember the question he asked you? What tipped you off?
- A: I didn't get your question.
- Q: You said there was a point after your family was taken away where Jewish policemen asked you a question and that indicated to you that he knew about your activities.
- A: Yeah, yeah.
- Q: What was his question?

- A: What do you need? It was a part of the parole, it was a question and an answer. More or less, what do you need? I told him I --.
- Q: If you could just start over and say the policeman asked me, because my question will be edited.
- A: The policeman was a uniformed policeman asked me a question that probably it was a part of the parole, the first part, "What do you need?" So my answer was, "I need here to find a place for sleep this night." In Yiddish it sounds other (speaking Yiddish), or (speaking Yiddish). So then, he understood and he showed me where to go in the cellar. Yeah. And afterwards, there were many such cases that an open cooperation between the policemen and the organization, but sometimes this policeman also to fulfill orders for the Judenrat, for the Elderstrat in order to deport people and so on. The policeman who took part of expelling or of deporting my family, I remember very good, because afterwards he was also a part of our organization. It was not in the middle of the organization, but he used to come to our kibbutz, what we called, and I told him, "You know you are the man that took my family." So he told me, "Oh, why didn't you didn't say that?" I'm not sure that if I would say him that could help but what happened to him, he also perished afterwards.
- Q: Do you know of any other examples of police helping or the Judenrat helping the underground organizations? Other ways?
- A: I know many, but I remember very, very significant thing. When I have to leave -- not when I have, when I was allotted to leave the ghetto with all the ammunition and everything, at March 1944 at night through the gate of the ghetto, so at the gate of the ghetto were some people who were staying there all the time, all the -- even before and after, including they were some policemen, and they knew we were not going as it was reported by one of us that we are going outside like a team of work in the woods, but we are going to fight with partisans. At this moment I saw also that these tremendous cooperations and the one moment the lights, it was electric were off. It was very dark, so even the German soldier or watchman could see something so it happens so that the conditions become very bad for realize who is who. And that was done with a policeman there. Maybe there were more than one. Not only policeman, but also some officers of the Judenrat or Elderstrat. They were staying day and night at the gate and controlling the people who come to work and again and back, especially the people from Arbeitant (ph), it was a work department. So, that I was sure -- so that I also saw, not that I only knew. Probably I was -- I knew about this before, it were rumors that somebody is going to help us and they had helping. We knew this, but here I saw myself.
- Q: It must have been very encouraging?
- A: Yes. No, but I was very encouraged. I didn't think too much of this. I was one step

outside to the ghetto to the forest, so it's like going from the hell to paradise.

Q: I want to ask you a couple more questions and then I want to hear about your escape and your life in the forest. Did you have -- within the ghetto, did you have any special assignments or roles within the underground movement? Were there certain things that you had to do, to perform?

A: Not something. I was a private.

Q: But did you deliver messages, did you go and get supplies?

A: Yes, so that was very natural everything I did -- even I didn't remember them. But what I remember that I took all this very, very, very seriously to fill out well done job because it's a holy thing and I am devoted for this. Yes -- I was thinking that after all this, no -- this organization belongs, maybe everybody belongs to this organization and there somewhere is sitting general staff, with maps and everybody's giving orders and they knew much better than me so I only have to fulfill.

Q: But what were the orders that you followed? What did you do?

A: What I have done, I remember I brought bottles, another day I brought also to bring money. Bring money.

Q: From where?

A: So I tried to sell something from a house and instead to buy bread or other food, I give it. Or to go from one place to another place, or maybe to also steal some things for this organization. I remember now, lamps, electrical lamps, even used, they told to collect them and I knew that it's for make small bombs or grenades, primitive. Such things.

Q: You mentioned that you kept a diary. Do you think a lot of other people at this time were keeping diaries?

A: If you're asking me if I think, no.

Q: You know?

A: No.

Q: At the time were you aware of --.

A: At the time I didn't know. Nobody told me because people doesn't -- didn't tell too much because that can be -- that can be dangerous for somebody if it would be found, nobody knows if it's good for him or for his family and maybe it's also not good because now his

family will know -- so, no, it was very, very privately.

Q: Now you know, I mean, I've looked through the Kovno ghetto diary by Mr. Torey, were a lot of other people keeping diaries as well?

A: Yes, a lot. For him it was very easy because he --.

Q: I need you to say Avraham Tory.

A: Avraham Tory, that his former last name was Golup (ph) and he was the secretary of the Judenrat or Elderstrat, according my knowledge, for him it was very easy to keep a diary for one side many, many information and also documents. He had sometimes only to copy them in the -- put in his diary. On the other side he should have had more places to hide them because everybody knows that he's writing and that it was for his daily work, so he had not to be so keeping in silence because nobody would interfere with him.

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

- Q: If you can just very briefly repeat to me what it was that the Jewish policeman said to you that indicated he knew what was going on so that I understand that word parole.
- A: So change the word parole and password.
- Q: You can say parole or password, but I need you to begin by saying the policeman. It's a full sentence.
- A: So, the policeman who were a very close to the entrance on their Block C or Block Tze (ph) as we called it, I knew him before. I knew even his name. His name was Daniel Billard (ph) and his question was (speaking Yiddish), it means, what do you need here? I understood I knew it before that this is the beginning of a password, we called it parole. So, the answer on this password, or the parole was, "We have -- we get here or we have here to sleep this night." In Yiddish it sounds (speaking Yiddish) mir or I, I don't remember well, anyway to sleep here, so he was satisfied because this was the true parole and he let me in to come and maybe show me also the way to go inside or in the cellar that I don't remember very good but afterwards somebody opened a cover on the ground and they also to put away the stones that were under this cover and I felt that I am falling down, down, down, until several hands caught me and they bring me to a place to a certain room. It was dark there, that what I remember.
- Q: The other question I have is, I assume there were also Communists cells or other groups and I'm wondering if you -- the different groups worked together or if they had separate responsibilities in terms of helping people get supplies or get out of the ghetto. Do you know -- what did you know about that at the time?
- A: At that time, we knew that we are not the only, that the other groups were organized. We called them several names one name was the Communist or the Mushtas (ph), because of Joe Stalin. Ofdevantzes (ph), or Coatkes (ph), Coatkes means short jackets, overjackets, coats, but short. But we knew that they doesn't belong to us, they belong to the left-left and some of them we knew even before the ghetto. Some change their places, come from the Zionists to the Communists and why? Because as we understood, they are more than we. They are a lot. And one of them it was very known his name was Chaim Yellin (ph). He was a very known figure even in all the ghetto, even outside the organization. We knew also or maybe we had the feeling that they has the best connections outside with the partisans and probably I was told, probably it was my feeling, but we knew that they are the prominent people in the organization or their organization is more important than ours in the terms of communication with outside. We knew the partisans can be only Soviet partisans because other partisans will not deal with us. And if Soviet partisans, it's Communists, so again, so they felt themselves very strong in the ghetto even to be a Communist in this time was very dangerous for the Germans and for the Lithuanians because several times they were looking after such people in order to arrest them and to

kill them. But in the ghetto it was like in autonomy everybody could -- it was like a big shelter in terms of politics. So, they felt themselves very good and very secure. Even more when we had to go to the forest, so it was a rumor between us that they are having a preference to go and also their girls, or girlfriends, or wives will get a better -- a better position, or they had not to wait so long as our girls. And I will not forget one thing that one of our girls, were organized in Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair, we were living this time already in a communa, in the collective, it was -- the name was Mildos (ph) 7, because the street was Mildos and the number of the house was 7. So it was called Milda 7 everybody, not everybody, but many knew that that belonged to Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair. The Communists have also their house not far from us and also ABC, Abetze (ph) Irgun L'Tzion (ph) has their house. So, the developments of all the houses was similar. People were alone without parents, without families, decide to live together and it was also convenient for the organization. Everybody can catch all his -- all their members at one time and they have control and they can also hide their arms and make training with arms, so it was good for everybody. So, I'm coming back to one of our girls which belonged to Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair, her name was Rosa, Rosa. She was already taken to the gate in order to be included in a group -- I don't remember the number of the group -- going by truck to the forest. She was taken away at the last moment, and instead her was put in a girl of the -- what we called them Communist and they are calling no or even the ghetto they have a cover name. It was called Anti-Facists Fight Organizations. So, they have a preference and when we come, I come to the forest I found a lot of people who belonged to their organizations and of -- from us were only I think eleven or twelve with one, only one girl. For girls it was generally more difficult. It's because the high command of the partisans is Ruditsky, or Rudniky for us, demand they give preference for men, male good who trained not with revolvers but with long rifles, long rifles mean long arms and better males than females. The ghetto organization had another pressure to do what they demand. So, it all the time were compromise, here, there. Anyway, the last decision that - - the factor let's say, was that most of the girls, Jewish girls and these detachments, and I am talking about the detachments, Kovno detachments in the Ruditsky Forest which was called this to the German occupants that most of the girl did belong before to the Communist circles or what was called Anti-Facist Fighter Organizations, that is.

Q: Were the non-Communists organizations more effective with working with the Jewish community in terms of getting supplies or hiding spaces or money or anything than the anti-facist organizations.

A: The Zionist organizations, and there are several, one of them it was very big, it was --

Q: What about the Zionist organizations in the ghetto?

A: The Zionist organizations, and I am talking mostly about their underground organizations because there were many organizations like parties, but they belong to more adult people, but talking about the youth movements, the Zionist youth movements of -- in the Kovno Ghetto, we are talking about three main organizations. It Irgun Brei Tzion (ph),

organization of bright young braves, any way now we would call them general Zionist. It included also religious Zionists, liberal Zionists and so on, that's one. The other was what I mentioned before Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair, and Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair with the time where we coordinated with Ha'Chalutz Ha'Tzair, or Dror (ph). It was more or less also ideological very close. So they afterwards established the collective of the kibbutz together. What I mentioned Mildos Sheva (ph), Mildos 7 was together. I would call it in one word the --as it means the labor camp of the Zionists.

Q: I need to understand something. What you're telling me is that most of the underground in the ghetto was young people?

A: Of course.

Q: What about people who were 30 years old?

A: Thirty year old, they're very on the border.

Q: Will you say just as a complete sentence that the underground in the Kovno Ghetto was young people, if you can just make a statement like that and then continue.

A: Continue, or come back to describe -- maybe it's too complicated what I'm talking about.

Q: I think what you can is that the underground -- because I don't think people know this -- was really young people and that if you then kind of go and say the Zionist organizations maybe had better cooperation with the community, or I don't know.

A: I am coming to this, but first of all, it's important to describe who they are, who they were. So, we are talking about underground in Kovno Ghetto, maybe also other ghettos, we are talking mostly about young people. Young people it means maybe from 15, 16 till 30. If they were more, they were exceptions. And I will tell you who were the Zionists. They were divided into three or four groups. They were the general Zionists and the organization was called Abetze, Irgun Brei Tzion (ph). In this organization were also included some of religious Zionists, Bnei Akiva (ph). After -- the other was Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair, and they with a time unified with the Dror or Ha'Chalutz Ha'Tzair. It also left workers' organization. They were very, very close ideologically, and they established the collective or the kibbutz called Mildos Sheva (ph), Mildos 7. Sheva, it means seven in Hebrew. We used very much to talk Hebrew also in the ghetto. Therefore I am mentioning sheva, so it's important; it reminds me. The other group was Beitar. Beitar and other people were incorporated in this ideology that's three. And probably we can also include to this organizations Brit Tzion (ph), were adult people let's say from 30 till 60 or more. It was an organization who helped the Abetze, who were young people. So, if talking about young people about the really underground organization who were prepared to do more or less everything then we are talking about organizations. The ABC, Abetze, not ABC, Irgun Brei Tzion, Ha'Chalutz Ha'Tzair and Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair, and Beitar --

they were very involved in the life of the ghetto because their establishment of the ghetto was also Zionist. If you will take Dr. Elkous and his deputy of the Elderstrat, Leib Garfunkel (ph) and the others were former activists or top members or leaders of the Zionist organizations in Kovno before the war. So, it happen so also the staff of the Elderstrat in all of officer were sitting people more Zionists than all the others. So that it was natural that they could help with many things their organization, the underground organization, with money, with means, with transportation, and what's most important, with covering them. I mean, the police. The Jewish Ghetto Police. I remember that our organization, also we sent some of our members to be organized in the police in order that they can help us, they can tell us what is going and so on and so on. Even there was one, two, or four people who belong to the Communist organization who also sent to serve in the police, in the Jewish Police in the ghetto. Anyway, the partition of work became so, or it happened without our planning so our planning was the Zionist organization were more active in the ghetto because they are close to the Elderstrat, they know many things they can get help on the other side. The Communist, the Anti-Facist Fight Organization they have very good connections with the outside, with the partisans, with the Communists outside the ghetto. And so it was a very good combinations between the two big parts, contra parts of one big organization with that they should have one roof in a certain place it was called, in a certain time it was called the MTC it means Military Technical Commission.

Q: When was this?

A: Oh, it was in 1943, in this time when the topic of going to the forest was very, very -- had become very hot. So, it was natural and it was also coordination between the two big parts. It was a coordination until a certain point. For instance, who will go if it will be in each group? Each group, a certain group is able to take 20 people, who will be the 20? So it -- maybe it was a key, it was called a political key or organizational key, 15 from this side and 5 from this side, and if girls, so the most girls were from the Communist and we took it for granted that it cannot be others, this is, and they were begging, I don't know how it was done but we could feel it and even when I have to go, so I could not go with others, I have to wait. I remember there was a group which left before me from Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair and Ha' Chalutz Ha'Tzair, they left, I guess, in January 1944. I have to wait another two months. It was also a question with rifle. Who will give me a rifle. I cannot go in the street and buy it. So, I decide very easily to sell my watch, my hand-watch, I remember even the firm, it was Tiso (ph). I saved it for bar mitzvah for my Uncle Moses and I gave it to a certain man. He brought me money, I give the money my - the activist of Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair, I remember the name, his name was Eli Rausuk (ph), and one day he told me, "It's settled. When you go, you will go with a rifle." Of course I was very happy. Other things like boots, high boots, because without high boots you cannot go to the forest. It's like arms. He went with me this guy, Eli Rausuk, like a big brother or like a father, until we got two good boots fit for my legs, for my feet. And afterwards, he went with me to a tailor in order to make for me an overcoat also, half to here, because you cannot go with a long coat in the forest and so on and so on. And also

equipment and everything. He went with me mostly to the workshops in the ghetto. Also, the management of the workshop was helping the partisan organizations, and the coordination, we understood that it was made in the high level between the management of the workshops the organization -- underground organization and somebody in the Elderstrat or the Judenrat. Anyway, when I went to the forest, I was very good equipped. Also, with cigarettes and tobacco and with underwear and with a rucksack, a sack to put my things, a raincoat and even with a white shirt, no not shirt, a white -- you know, in order to -- a white manufacturer, I would -- in order to use it when we are going in an area of snow so we could very nice to make all camouflage. It was -- they did the best. They did the best, and it also give me a very good feeling that somebody is taking care on me because I was alone, without family, without nothing. And I have also to mention a party before this in our collective, singing songs and drinking even vodka but of course they told we have to accustom ourselves to the life in the partisans. And I remember one or two people come from the forest, from the groups who left before and come to make us -- to give us instructions how to behave. With arms and with other things, and also how to use a password, we called it a parole. And some was in Russian, not everybody knew the Russian language. We knew more or less, but in order not to be lost, and also that a good partisan must to drink vodka, not to be an exception. He have to accustom himself with all the life. And they gave us a lot of advice. How to handle when it happens so, and when it happens so, what to do, and afterwards these two guys took us to the forest and they become our guides.

Q: Now, I want to hear all about that escape to the forest. So, I want you to tell me -- actually I'm thinking of one other question and maybe you can make the answer brief, but I know in the beginning I think this important, I know in the beginning you were operating in very small cells. Nobody knew what anybody else was doing. There were three, maybe five people. All of a sudden you're in a commune. At what point in time did all of this change and how?

A: After the 26th of October 1943 when we meet a big number of the organizations, not one, met together in the hideout, in the Block C after we could make lights in the evening, so we saw many people I know one body, somebody knew me but we're from different organizations. And from then, it was no more secrets. We kept other secrets, where we were hiding, arms and so on and some but the belonging to the organization was no more secret. Of course we kept many things, when we are going, and other things, and our destination, our direction, even we didn't know exactly, only the last two days we were kept in a certain place, and then we get the last instructions. From there we could not go back home. It wasn't home it was a kibbutz, no more, and then we were given, very secret things that if you are lost and you are alone what do you have to do.

Q: So, how did you get out of the ghetto? Try to remember and describe for me your escape from Kovno.

A: Oh, I will never forget it in my life, because I-- our coming out was postponed several

times and we become -- I would say, nervous or maybe it will not fulfilled because it was like a dream, like a dream, and a good dream. So one or two or some hours we have to wait again and to come again. I don't know what happened and why, but I trust the organization like it would be God, for a religious man. So, it comes the moment when they call, "Okay, now you have to go to the tracks." They prepared us, I think, with numbers that not altogether will climb, and so it will not make disorder there. So, on the track, I saw two soldiers, German soldiers with uniform, maybe they belong to the police or Wehrmacht. After a few minutes I realize these are two from our group, and they make like they would be our escorts. So, I had really to admire organization. If they are so clever, so sophisticated that they can prepare everything, so I hope it will be everything good. And we heard that somebody's asking questions at the gate, police or other and then at certain times electricity was short, closed in order to make that nobody can watch us and so on and somebody was asking, "Where are you going?" so another voice answer, "Yes, these men are going to work in the brigade of Baptai (ph)," a certain place where Jewish use to work there, hard work. And we moved. They all begin to walk and we felt more than happy, but in a certain place not far from the ghetto the truck was stopped. What happened? We have to be very quiet. Not to questions or nothing, and what's important, not to take with us things that can make evidence that we were Jews from the ghetto, other Jews. For example, I have to leave the pictures from my family and from me of course, many things and not one word written in Yiddish. If I would be religious so I could not take with me _____, no, nothing. So I'm coming again when the truck stopped and we hear again voices, here and there, talking Lithuanian, talking Russian. After a few moments somebody saw a big sack with -- that was about ten or fifteen rifles. I don't remember how it was -- how I get one of them, but I did and by this moment or maybe before, we had a commander and a comissar, it was political commander. No, I think the commander was one of the people who should be our guide to the forest, because he came several times there and here and he knows, and should know every stone on the highway. So, in certain moment he told us, "Now you are taking off your red stars and putting them in a certain place," or maybe eating them -- I don't remember, and he told, "Now you are partisans." We have guns. We have maybe hiding in certain places because it also can be against us if somebody is coming to make a search, but maybe not because we have all our rifles and now we can now do something, we can defend ourselves. So, we went very far about 40 or 50 miles and you have to stand up and then we have to stand in a line and we were walking by foot. To put our white shirt or lining, I don't know how to call it in English, big white things, we put it so they -- we could not be very easy watched because this area was with snow and we went, and we went, and many miles and we had heavy packs with us. We also have not private packs but things to take for the forest, for the bases, maybe a radio, maybe other things, maybe medicaments for the small hospital that we had in the forest, maybe other things, maybe it calls for -- I don't remember but it was very heavy to go. I remember some of the people collapsed on the way.

Q: How many were there with you?

A: Oh, we were a very big group, I think 28, and we have --

Q: Men and women?

A: Men and women and we have -- I remember everybody has a gun, two have machine guns, and one has an automatic rifle, that's called a sedete (ph) in the Russian terms. Even the girls had guns, yes. And also it was heavy to have the gun and the pack. So, at night we come to a place in a certain village, and we were told that we have not to go in only one -- everybody in one house not in the middle of the village but in the side. Excuse me, it was not -- it was at day. At night we have to go, to go and to go and to go. At day, we come to a certain house like a farm, let's call it farm. So everybody come to this farm we weren't allowed to leave. Till the evening, we have collected about twenty people. So it was a neighbor come to see his neighbor. "You are very nice, you are our neighbor but you cannot leave." You know, it is because he cannot go and tell the police, and others. Nobody is leaving. Afterwards come his wife to look after him. What is he doing, my husband. Maybe he's drinking or maybe other things, so she come also. "You will stay with your husband." Sometimes you saw kids, and so on and so on. As evening, a lot of people with us, and at this time some of us could relax and to sleep by a certain order. Some were staying with the rifle and hand radio that everything can't happen. And so we make it like two or three days until we come to the forests. Yes, and before we come to the forest we have to cross a very critical point. It was a railway. The railways were very watched by the Germans because it was a very strategic thing. Anyway we have to make operation to send people here and there and to watch the Germans will not come here, and we did it. After that we have to cross a highway. Also, more or less the same tactic and then we were told now we are in the partisan area. Partisan area. Also, we have to go with the arms, but you feel yourself to be more free, not be in tension so much more. But, for me it was another tension. If we are already in the kingdom of the partisans, so it's the tension of be proud of, joy, to be glad, to be happy, you can use many words for this. Sometimes I have seen signs on trees, heavy trees with swamps around them and sometimes we have to go on a very narrow tree which was lying. So, as it moved like in a story, or films that we have seen about the partisans after the October revolution in Russia or other places, and we have seen sometimes on the trees signs red, or white, or together so I was sure that it's for us, somebody put this for us. I was so trusting of the organizations, the partisans, not more of the organization of the ghetto. It was another authority for me. So, I was very high there, like I was took drugs. One moment we saw a man with a big, full hat, a Papacha (ph) it's called, of Siberia, with an automatic arm and he told us a password, in Russian parole. He didn't know, but our guys they knew, before they told him so he come smiling to us, "You're partisans," and he shook hands with everybody. But we have to go farther and farther, and we were exhausted, especially the girls and we have also weak people. Some people are very strong outside but here it was a hero who can make the way can also be a _____. Until we come to our bases. In our bases also we have to pass a guard but this guard was already one that we know from the ghetto, our man. Now also, we were kissing everybody and he had to leave us and to told that the group came from the ghetto. He himself could let us come inside. He did it,

he went, and the other was watching us, it must be. And afterward come the commander of the attachment and invited us all with greetings, "Now you can come in, you can come." And that was a big celebration. Everybody was asking me what happened with my uncle, with my girlfriend, and so on, the other thing, "Have you tobacco?" or maybe it was the first question. I was very large and everybody I gave my tobacco so tomorrow I have nothing to smoke for myself. But it was a very, very, very happy meeting, until its come to a finish and everybody has another friend to ask look we have other music it's not so nice, it's very hard to be a partisan and that already perished and that were already taken as prisoner of war by Germans and we knew what it means to be in prisoners a German, and partisan, and even a Jew, and that sometimes there are anti-Semitic incidents even between the partisans and so on and so on. But we were talking half the night until we asleep.

Q: Now, when you met with these other people in the forest, were they all Jews, were they Soviet partisans? I'm wondering who these other people were. Were they all part of your organization?

A: This time, and we are talking about March, 1944, and detachments of _____ to the occupants in Russian it's _____ so it can be translated "Death to the occupants or the conquerors," in English. So, it was a mixed unit from two or five or three paratroopers, they were the nucleus of this detachment. Lithuanian, or Russian, people before Communists and they were parachuted into the forest in order to establish this detachment. A big part were former prisoner of wars, Russian, who escaped from their camps, P.O.W. camps. And a big part, I think in the beginning the people of the ghetto made about 60, if not more percent, coming more and more and more till a day what from the ghetto nobody could no more join us for internal things that happened in the ghetto, so this turning point afterward we become less and less and less.

Q: And you said there were incidents of anti-Semitism, even with the partisans?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you experience any of that?

A: I have, yes. First at all, I heard the word ours and yours. What does it mean? For me everybody was now somebody very close. We are fighting together, and there, ours and yours. And I've seen that also they are living in the same -- incertain concentration of Jewish partisans and un-Jewish, not formal, but de-facto. So, I have another example. One of our guys, he was, he come really with us. A nice boy, a tall boy, he was dead because he ate too much. He was hungry too much and something happened to his stomach and he passed away so we buried him. So, what happened, it comes only the commissar and made a speech, "Ta, ta, ta, ta," and from the fighters they are not only Jewish fighters. That's what happened. There were other things, but I'm not sure if it was

anti-Semitism or not, some partisans, Jewish partisans, were shot by their comrades on the way to a certain missions. They came without them and told a story there that was very suspicious.

End of Tape #4

Tape #5

Q: How long were you in the forest fighting with the partisans?

A: I was till the first week of July 1944, and then --

Q: I'm sorry I want to hear a whole sentence, so say I was in the forest.

A: I was in the forest, or better, in the Rudniky Forest, as partisan till July 1944, the 9th of July we heard the thunder of the big guns, the artillery, the Katusha of the Red Army, or the Soviet Army, so we knew that -- and we knew also from other sources from radio or so, that the Red Army or the Soviet Army is coming back to this area. So, we were told also we will go like to help the big army to help them to liberate Wilno because Wilno was very close to us about 20 miles or so. But then happened a certain event that was for us, for me personally, very important. The 9th of July early in the morning come to us a girl partisan from the Wilno detachment which were located not far. We were all the time, we had, I would say, illegal relations. She was also from Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair. She was sent by Abba Kovner (ph). Abba Kovner was the commando of the Wilno detachment. Her name was Ruska Kolchak (ph), a very known partisan. She told -- came half secretly to us and told us, "You have to go now as we are doing, you will come to Wilno, but when you come, in Wilno, please don't leave the place. You will be in a new organization with the aim of to go immediately by all means we can to Palestine." And we were -- it was very logical for us and it was not big surprise and we left the forest and we come to Wilno and then was the beginning of a new organization. Afterwards, this organization gets the name Bricha (ph), it means escaping. And I was working for the archives of the internal ministry of Soviet Union, it's called Ainkavede (ph), yes. I was very proud that they took me. They took me because I knew several languages and I was intelligent. So, I attended high school, so they took me, and I was working there. One of my jobs was to make use from the material the Germans left, papers. And I did it with pleasure because I found them very interesting material, even some reports from the Germans made on our activity of my detachments. We also found list of names of Lithuanian soldiers and policemen who took part in killing Jewish people, so I was again very happy that I can do some important thing. But at the same time, we were building another illegal organization to go to Palestine. And one of this was to prepare false documents to go by train or by buses -- not buses but by tracks or by foot or by any means to go to Chernovtsy, it means in Bucovina in the south, southwest of Ukraine. From there to smuggle the border to Romania and there we were told maybe that we can find a ship and go to Palestine. That's close enough. From Kovno, or from Wilno to Bucuresti was about 1,000 kilometers, it's 900 miles. So, we did it bit by bit man after man. I left Wilno, I left my job, I left Wilno, I left my arms, with a girlfriend from the ghetto, with her small sister like we are a family. I am the father, she is the mother and the small sister is our daughter. It makes less dangerous for us. We get also a card, how to go from which place to which place, to whom to apply and what will be our passports. And we did it. And for instance, I left Wilno I think the 19th of January 1945. It means a

half year after I left the forest. I didn't want to come back to Kovno because I hate Kovno because every man in the street was a killer of my family or other of my friends. Wilno was for me more neutral, for me personally, and the other thing that we were told also not to go far because if somebody needed us and I had the opportunity to go and our train was to leave very fast this country, this lousy country of anti-Semitism and killers and all the bad things that I suffered, not only me but our whole communities, whole generation. So, we went to Wilno to Minsk, from Minsk to Baranovichi, I'm talking about Byelorussia. From Baranovichi to Koval, from Koval to Volpe. In each place we found a man he some give us to eat, sometimes also to sleep. Sometimes we slept outside on a roof of a wagon, but we did it and in Lvov it is Galicia or west Ukraine, then we met with some girls partisans we can call them liaison officers, L-I-A-S-O-N, so one of them, I remember was Zelda, she was also, she did such a job also between Wilno ghetto and the forests and we went -- and we were sleeping in the Jewish library of Lvov, on the ground, by there were two -- were several people, more and more and they have to go farther. So we heard one day that Chernovtsy one of the groups were caught and put into the prison. If so, the way is closed to that and we were talking it's burned. If so, we have to go to chose an alternative road. I even was sent for a while to other places in the south, to Stansislav, it's also the area of Ukraine, in order to make sure what happened in Chernovtsy because -- anyway I come back to Lvov, Lvov it's Lemburg, so I give a report and we decided to go straight from Lvov to Poland. To go to Poland we have to take new documents that we are Poles. So we made it, we crossed the border and the next day we were in a city called Pshemysl, or Peremyshl. There we also have to wait for several weeks, two weeks or three weeks and we made also a new kibbutz. We are living together and tried to go farther, also to make new documents because we didn't talk Polish. In Lithuania, the Jewish people, our generation, doesn't understand Polish. Even not to talk, and if you are talking, everybody will see that we are foreigners and that was very dangerous because we escaped from the Soviet Union and that only traitors are doing or enemies of the people and so on and so on. They will catch us and they will send us to Siberia, if not to shoot us. So, we went from Pshemysl to Zeshev (ph). In Zeshev we did a very fine thing. We went to the commander, or chief office of the county governor, Starosta (ph), Polish, and we told him that we are partisans who were from Greece and have to go to our country back. And we were talking between us Lithuanian. A little bit of Yiddish and we -- the rabbi of Zeshev, he knew the truth and he was translator. Before coming to this man, the governor, we make on our hands numbers like we were prisoners of Auschwitz or other places. We do it with very easy ink, the next day we could take it off. And we showed, "You see?" He told, "Here are the people." And we showed, "Here." So he gave us immediately, he was a very nice man, "Oh Greece, good." It was an incident he would -- he want that we will meet a really group from Greece and so we were very afraid they will recognize that we are not. So, we said, "No, we are very tired and we have to go immediately." He gave us documents and we went. From Zeshev to Transylvania, it means already Romania. Cluj, Klausenberg, from Cluj we took express train to Bucuresti because Bucuresti was former Romania and we trust that from Bucuresti we can go to Constanta to the port and then to take a ship to go to Palestine. But in Bucuresti probably the KGB or other services were following us. And we have to

move, we have to move and we heard that in Italy is a Jewish brigade from Palestine so that could be a good way we thanks them to come. So we did. And after being three months in Bucharest, also we were living in kibbutzim, oh, we were very -- not only from Lithuania also from Poland and Czechoslovakia and other places everybody was safe to remember that that is the best way to go to Palestine, but only for us former citizens from Soviet Russia, because Lithuania was a part of Soviet Russia, was so dangerous. So we decided we are going to Italy so we went back from Bucuresti to Cluj from Cluj to Budapest, from Budapest to Chambatoy (ph), from there to Saltzburg, that means Austria. In Austria we have to cross the border again to the area which belonged to the British Army, means Italy. Also we have again to cross the border and we were arrested several times by the Russians, patrols, and they took us here and took us back and everytime we have another story. In each pocket we have another document, other names, and we have to remember all the names all the nicknames, everything. So, we come to Italy. Italy we come to Tarviso (ph), it's on the border between Italy and Austria. We came the 15th or 14th of July 1945, and that was a big, big festival. What happened, many leaders from the survivors come there then we met Mr. Garfunkel, who was a member of the Elderstrat, and he was so nice received by the soldiers. Some of them were from Lithuania who emigrated to Palestine many years ago. They knew he was a very prominent man. Afterwards was Abba Kovner from Wilno, and maybe also Tzivia (ph) -- no, Tzivia we met on the way. Anyway, it was a big, big festival now, and from there we have yes, and Abba Kovner sent me for another emissary back to the Russians in order to show -- to be a guide for three soldiers from the Jewish brigade who want to go back to their homes. I don't know if they deserted for a certain time or get permission, but he was sure that if I made the way several times I know. I didn't know, but I did it. I didn't know the way, but somehow I did it and come back. When I come back I told more I will not go. I would like to come here to Palestine and finish with all the tasks. I am a private man now, so I was put in another kibbutz of young people with the supervision of Jewish soldiers in Mestre (ph), Mestre it very close to Venice, and we spend there a very nice Rosh Hashana, in the ghetto, Venice, in the Nafi (ph) of the English Army, with a chaplain, evrything, very nice. The Jewish soldiers become our parents of this kibbutz. One day I was told that, "You because you are already on the way a long time, you are chosen with another one to go to Palestine." It was in the middle of the night. Everything, you know, secretly and so and so, underground noise, and you're underground. Underground of the Bricha, that's made by Israel -- Palestine guys together with Jewish soldiers from the Brigade, or other soldiers, it was another mafia. So, we went all the night by truck, from Venice to Barre. It's all Italy, maybe took more than one night, I don't remember. But we come -- it was in the south of Italy. We were put in another camp, a very secret camp. We could not go out because it was secretly and the Italians should not know who we are.

Q: How many were there of you?

A: Oh, we were then about 250 people. Also from other groups because it was like a stream, which is going and when the stream is coming near Palestine, the stream becomes bigger

and bigger and bigger. So, we met people from other places even they come from Auschwitz. They were the real Auschwitz, not like me with a false number. And even from France and from Belgium and from many places. I told you it's like a river, it's coming, it's coming, but this place we were isolated -- even not to buy a wine from the peasants. They have a good wine for us, it was very important so we did, at night we did it. But we lost our patience and one day they took several guys from us, I think there were 180, and took us also by night -- at night to a certain place, a hiding port, a small port in Trento (ph), this is south of, south of Italy, and there was waiting for us a small ship. A small ship, a small ship, like half of a normal tennis place. We were 180 people and when we come to the ship it is also by certain order. It reminds me when I come to the truck in order to go to the forest. I wrote it afterwards also in my diary that it's the same sensation I have. Anyway we were took on the ship. The ship was very small, but in such a room there were about five or six floors of places to sleep, like in a store. Every man has so much place and it was -- I can't describe -- it was made like in a field hospital when somebody is carrying you. So, it was such --

Q: A cot.

A: A cot, yes. Many cots, and we were lying there about seven nights, six nights only at night we could go and have fresh air because British airplanes if they're watching us, military airplanes, because in this time the British prohibited to -- were not allowing the Jewish to come by the thousands to Palestine. It was their policy. And one night we could see the lights, we were told the Carmel Mount and other things, so afterwards it was not true it was Cypress, and we have to make it around Cypress because some ships were running after us, the English marina. So, marina in the sea and the Royal Air Force in the skies. Everybody is running after us. After we already left Europe, but we are in a very, very good mood, also singing. There were some pregnant women with us and we have not too much water. We are very short on water until we came one night, it was the 23rd of October, 1945 to a place, very small place that ship can stay near. It was in the center of the coast of Palestine, Israel between Shefaim (ph) and Kibbutz -- Kibbutz Shefaim, and another place, let's say Kibbutz Shefaim. And there we have seen that many very small people are coming like swimming. We didn't know who they are. Afterwards we realized that they were people of the Hagganah (ph), who come to take us because we will not -- we have to go in the water. So, I remember that a very heavy girl took me on her shoulder so I told her, "I can go by my foot." No she told, "We have order, nobody will go." After that I understood, because we had to make several kilometers by foot until we came to a certain place that they took us on another truck and also us and also what we have, our cargo. I had some shmates (ph) with me, that's all. Anyway, when they took us also, I could see that some people with Australian big hats are watching with arms on the two sides. I was told that if the British police will come, they will shoot on them. So I was told, I don't know if they would do it. Anyway, I felt myself very good and I remember that we were so thirsty that we took grapefruits from the trees and we eat it together -- all together. And the same nights we were brought to a village by the name Givat Chen (ph). They took me and another partisan and knocked on the door. It was in

the midnight. The man asked, "Who are you?" His answer was very funny, "We brought you a man from the sea." So, I am a man from the sea. I never was a sailor. "A man of the sea," he opened immediately. Maybe it was also a password, I don't know, but he understand, he looked at me and cried. He talked with me Polish, German, Yiddish. I told him I am talking Hebrew. "Oh, very good, very good." All his family were sleeping and he asked me, "Don't to talk so loud." I told him, "But I am happy." So, he put me in the washroom to clean myself because I maybe was looking like a rubber something with a beard, not make my hair nothing. Half military uniform, I have half civilian, a very bad impression. So, he took me in the washroom leave me in the washroom to wash. When he come back, he found me drinking the water, here from the water, he looked, "What are you mad?" I tell him, "I am still thirsty. I have not drink water for several days." I told him, "I can give you coffee or tea as much as you want." Anyway, I slept and the day after they collected all the people from the farmers from this village, and everybody had to decide where he is going. It was a table with a green cover like in an office, and there were sitting people from several organizations. Zionists, left Zionists, this Zionists, anyway, and also Beitar, or not Beitar, anyway, I told that I belong to Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair so please send me the kibbutz of Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair, so it happened. And afterwards I was living in this kibbutz, Beit Zera (ph) a year, until September 1946 and then I decided to go to Jerusalem to the University. But it was a short time, I could not make my studies because it ocured the War of Independence and that's another story.

- Q: How long was this journey from the time that you were in Wilno and you made the decision until the time you actually came ashore in Palestine, how many months?
- A: The decision was made in the 9th of July, 1944, but it was only a decision. But the really journey began the 19th of January 1945 and finished the 23rd of October 1945, so it means about ten months.
- Q: I want to ask you one more question, and it's a little bit of a different way of thinking. You've had many experiences over the last 40 years in Israel and that's for another time, but you rebuilt your life. You have a very fascinating life in Israel now. Are there influences from your boyhood in Kovno that you think are still a part of you?
- A: Boyhood, you mean --
- Q: The time you're growing up?
- A: You mean till the Holocaust or after, because you cannot put --
- Q: Not after so much, but I mean you came from a strong culture or strong community in Kovno, family, friends, religion, how much did that influence what you became later on?
- A: Oh, I think that my childhood and what you call boyhood, is a new word for me, I never heard it, but I like it, it, I think it's a continuity, nothing happened because when I came

to Palestine I found many of my family of my uncles, aunts, cousins, classmates who did it before from the organization from Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair, so it was a road. A road that everybody will do it before or after, so for me it was so natural, only what happened, the Holocaust and all the things after and maybe also include the Soviet time 1940 and 1941, it was something out the order for me. But to come to Palestine what for me it was like two and two are four.

Q: I was just wondering if there was anything especially unique in your growing up in Kovno that --

A: Yeah, but Kovno was a very modern community. Kovno, Lithuania of Kovno, even more than Wilno was called the Eretz Yisrael of the Diaspora. So sometimes we were also -- it was not all the community but we were brought up in a Jewish, Yiddish, or Communist ideology but if we take, I would say about 60 percent of the Lithuanian Jewry they were brought up in the way that I was brought up. May I give you an example. In 1935 there were elections in all the world for the Zionist Congress. It happened every two years so in this small Lithuania with about 155,000 Jewish people inhabitants, they took part in this elections about, I think, more than 45,000 people. Maybe some of them did it not seriously, they did automatically, and maybe they were not very strong Zionists, but anyway in this time is a need of the 30's the Zionist, I would not even tell Zionists, the national feeling was very strong. The Hebrew culture was dominating. So, even religious people were Zionist, so it's not a contradiction. So, I cannot see that Israel in the 40's when I came was something new for me. I'll give you another example. When the bus, no it was a bus, no more trucks, it was a bus from Egged company took us from the place I was at night in the village Givat Chen, to the kibbutz, I was sitting and I remember a woman asked me, "Where are we now? What is here?" It's a long way it's about four hours. So I told her, "You don't know? That's the Mount Tabor." So, because I knew the geography of Palestine, or Eretz Yisrael, more than of Lithuania. And you know like a fish who is in an aquarium and put back to the original water. That happened to me.

Q: Thank you.

A: You're welcome.

End of Tape #5

Conclusion of Interview