

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Harold Zissman

April 27, 1995

RG-50.030*0318

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Harold Zissman, conducted by Randy Goldman on April 27, 1995 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

HAROLD ZISSMAN

April 27, 1995

Q: I'd like you to start off by telling me your name, date of birth, place of birth.

A: My name is Harold Zissman, although it is not my birth name. My birth name was Zuckerman, same Harold. I was born in Poland in a city called Austrofmazotyetski (ph) and that was about a hundred kilometers east from Warsaw. My parents and grandparents and many generations before them were of the Hasidic belief. However, they were involved in business from crockery, porcelain, glassware, and they used to distribute it to the stores in the vicinity and in further away places, maybe 200 kilometers to 300 kilometers from base. It was a divided territory that they shared among the other and it was their territory. They would supply to the stores. My father, like my uncle, like his son, all were part of the operation who used to, by horse and buggy, deliver goods to the various clients each week. And this was the means of making a living. It was three generations involved in it -- my grandfather, his children, which that means my father's brothers and sister, my uncle which it was, again, part of the family. So, it was a family owned and operated, a closed corporation that all these families lived out of this business.

Q: Just for the record, I don't think you told what your date of birth is.

A: My date of birth is 19, ah, May 10, 1922.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your family life before the war.

A: Well, my personal life was brought up a real strict, devote Hasidic kind of way. Besides all of that, my father was a Corporal in the Polish Army, during World War II, and life was strictly on a military basis, with the command, you had to do that, you were told to do it. If you didn't do it, you had to report. So, it was really a strenuous life, that it was in the house, especially for me since I was the oldest of four. I had two more brothers and a sister, who vanished in the Holocaust.

Q: Did you, you went to a religious school?

A: I graduated a tri-level school, which it was a private school, influenced by Zionist organization, Mesrah (ph), to which my father was a member and a member of the board on top of it. Tri-level because it was Yiddish, Hebrew, and Polish; it was not just for linguistic-sake, but in history and geography and literature and so on. And later on, I graduated equal to a college, as we talk about the modern way; the name was Dachkemone (ph).

Q: Did you have contact with non-Jewish people as well? What was the, sort of the population of the town?

A: When you talk about scholastically at the time, it was a sectarian school. It was strictly boys, without girls, and it was strictly influenced by religion, so it was a boys' religion type of school; if you wish to call it parochial, would be in place. However, from the outside world, we were living on both sides for Gentiles. So to say that I associated with Gentile boys, yes, I did, played maybe soccer with them, or just like neighbors sometimes get together.

Q: Did you experience any anti-Semitism in those days?

A: Oh, yes. As a kid going to school, it would have been sort of different as to bring it out in today's world, as we live in, in the 20th century. We used to, for instance, to give you an example, going to school early in the morning, carry a lantern, for instance, to go. The boys of the neighbors at that particular time, maybe would walk their dogs or stuff like that. And it was nothing odd to see this dog was sent against us. Although, we were going sometimes two, three kids together, neighbors; or maybe throwing, for the sake of play, throwing a rock at us. I did not see friendliness in it. I sensed that because the words that would follow it would be sometimes easily recognizable: "dirty Jew." And the likes that kids were ready, even at that age, and I'm talking now by the age of seven, eight, nine years of age. And you probably did not, I did not get the training of hatred, but I felt my neighbors kids do what they did to us was hatred.

Q: How did you make sense of this?

A: There was no sense. You do what you've got to do. At times, sometimes maybe you throw a rock back. And that's when a fight would ensue and you'd come home and have to pay for it because the parents did not like for you to fight on the street. So, to resist was bad; not to resist was also bad. So, it was a mix of no decision and no resolve.

Q: Before 1939, what did you know about Hitler or Nazis where you lived?

A: First of all, it was in our history books in 1933 when Hitler did come and became Chancellor of Germany at that time. So we were aware historical from school. Second of all, come 1937 when Hitler drove all the Polish citizen Jews out of Germany where they had to come back, although Poland didn't claim them, but they were Polish citizens. We were exposed to them real early because our city was about 40 kilometers from Prussia; in other words, the location would be to go about 135 kilometers from Kinegsburg (ph) which was Prussia, and we were about 100 kilometers from Warsaw. So, for us to see scene at that particular time was a real scene to see. The people came to the city and they had nothing with them; all they had with them was their belongings that was on them. And I remember we would learn as a child that kitchens were set up for those people so they could come and have something to eat. And it was cramped quarters for the people that somebody moved in with somebody else and so on. So the story in 1937 was not just a story that one read in the paper or one heard on the radio if, occasionally you could, because not every home did have a radio, but you used to listen in sometimes outside

near the windows of the houses that did have a radio. And it looks like the people didn't mind; they were all aware of it. So it was no longer a story that was told, but it's a story that was seen. It was real; the trap is there.

Q: Do you remember your family talking about what was happening or whether there was anything for you to do, or whether it would come to your town, these kind of problems?

A: Okay. It was, a few months later, I'm talking now '37, come '38, this scene became more vivid locally. We had the river Nalif (ph) going through our city. And it may sound a little funny that in 1914, during World War I, it was Germany that was occupying the area, not this type of German's that they build a bridge that was still considered new in our city, crossing that river. And at that particular time, the Polish Army started to start building dams; in other words they wanted to flood the on-coming German Army. This is how they thought yet in their minds, that it would be. So basically, being that you were a youngster like I was at the time, that in the summertime going to the beach which we used to walk and share our fun there, areas near the beach became restricted because they were building the dams. So one could not help but see a war, sort of this kind building up. We only did not know how long it would take. So, to answer, as I just stated, we did know something tragic as war will come, but we did not know when.

Q: Now, was there any talk of your family of trying to leave that area, or at this point?

A: Yes, it was a personal tragedy at my house. I lost my mother at that time and tragedy was home already. As a gesture, my mother's sister which still alive in here -- she's in a home now -- and her brothers, which with they are no longer alive, tried to save me. Since she had a letter in her possession, the last letter which I have, with my mother pleading for her to save me and bring me to America. They did send me the papers and as time that I wanted to leave, I didn't make it. Hitler beat me to it. By 1939 in September, I was supposed to come for the visa, but September 1, the war broke out. So, yes, as I said, we felt it and we knew it, the other tragedy. Personally at home, the size, the eminence of the other tragedy to follow, with Hitler.

Q: Tell me of your memories of the war beginning, in your town?

A: The preparation before the war, as I mentioned about the dam and the mobilization it started already, in early '39. And at that particular time became month by month, the news became as an echo, closer to the cities, especially like ours. For instance, on market days, before hostilities had started, we used to have an exchange of German people coming in to purchase their eggs, buy their chickens and so on, because it was an open market and Poland was willing, we had an over abundance of food in Poland and they were good customers so therefore, we saw all at once that not so many Germans coming to market days because Poland did not now want to sell it to them, so before making it a total restriction, there was limitations of how much they could take out, or how much they could buy. So, one could sense a change and all of this here affected a little bit of the

economy because you were built up and ready. The other part, my father would come home with stories telling of sometimes inticinating (sic), stone throwing, and so on. So, on every occasion, being from school, being from for instance religious upbringing, as we used to come. I was singing in a choir at that time with one of my friends who were the cantor's children attending the same school as I did. Yavnev (ph) was the name of the school, by the way for the record. And the tune of the high holiday 1938 was no longer the same as it was in '37 or prior to that. It was sort of more solemnity. So in every way of life, from school to going to synagogue to going to the beaches, one could sense a change all over. And you did not have to find out what; everyone was tuned to the news very much and the newspapers. And, in our own family, we started to prepare ourselves and my parents and grandparents remembered that in World War I, our city of Stranlinka (ph), which I am speaking of, at the time that I was, we were living in Stranlinka. Because prior to that, my family were in another city, the city of my birthplace, Astramocietska (ph) involved in the same business as I aforementioned, but they were forced, of their personal matters with one of the partner's bankruptcy, to move and they moved to Stranlinka (ph) in 1929, re-starting again only a family operation, not like before when it was multi-families. And therefore they decided, since they were remembering that in World War I, Ostranlinka (ph), the city was totally burned down by Lastrovmazofyetsky (ph) not having a river nearby, not having the main station railroads remain quiet, so they decided that probably the war would not reach in Lastrovmazofyetsky (ph) but it will be only in Ostralinka (ph). And, as a means of dividing, so they also took are merchandise from our warehouse and try to put it in hiding in the other city, so in case it gets destroyed here, they'll have something to live on there and vice versa. So, yes; the family began to know before September 1 that world, not knowing to us that World War I was going to be named but that some war is going to break out any time, any moment. And that was what they decided to do, basically, is to divide. And closer to the war, the family, all of us, were in that city of Lastrovmazofyetsky (ph) and in Ostralinka they left the homes, the houses that we were living in, as sort of to the outcome it will be.

Q: So, you all moved back before the war. When you talked about going to school, which city were you talking about?

A: Ostralinka.

Q: Ostralinka?

A: While I went to school, see again, I started school, looks like my parents did not know what to do with me at home. So at three and a half years old I was sent to a private, to like a malamet (ph) as we say in Hebrew, which it means a tutor translated into English. And it was private. That tutor had about ten, twelve kids and it still is, I'm of age now, but it's still the picture of that one room and with all the songs surrounding it, you know, with the story of a tutor still is very vivid to me to this day. So, three and a half years of age, I already was a student in school. However, it was again another story. When I

reached the age of seven, school in Poland was compulsory. You had to start at 7 o'clock, at seven years old. So therefore, when I reached the age of seven, we were in a new city already, moving into Ostralinka (ph). At that particular time I was very advanced in my Yiddish and in my Hebrew teachings. However, Polish I could speak but I did not know enough to qualify to be in the first grade. And since it was a private school, so my father would be involved paying extra money for three years for me to catch up because, according to the exams, I would qualify to go into the third grade, but I did not, they wouldn't let me be in the third grade since I did not know, had enough education in Polish. So my father hired a tutor to tutor me at home in Polish only and with permission, and I was transferred into the second grade. However within the first year and the tutor, I was able to go in immediately, not even finishing the year, to third grade. So, it was rough on me even then, already, you know, as it was the rest of my life.

Q: What do you remember about the very beginning of war? Was your town occupied?

A: Okay. At the year that I'm talking about, to make it vivid, it falls out before the high holidays, as we call our Rosh Hashanah, the way it would be. So the day before Rosh Hashanah, while we were in Ostrov mazovetsky (ph), that's when the Germans entered the city. That first hello from them that we had was the same very day, within hours, they occupied the city. They started to round up Jews, in other words, coming in with their guns drawn in their hands and you they rouse, "Jew out". And we were all gathered at the place over there, where it was the high school, which had a big place, you know. But, I mean the place that was the playground that they had. And we were made to be seated, hands over our head and the war, I cannot exactly tell you the amount, but there were a few thousand of us. On the balcony, we could see a machine gun, a big machine gun drawn. We were surrounded in lines in between, with German soldiers, be they had carbines, some of them had automatic weapons. And for what reason we were there, what, known knew. But we expected the worst in the position that we were. After an hour of sitting over there, and it's already curfew time near, all of a sudden, looks like it was a command and we were told to get up and round back. As we found it out, the next day late, that Army was called to help some on the front line while they were going towards Warsaw at that time. In the days of the war, it was probably the fourth day of the war, and so take it, more or less, that it was September 4 at that particular time. And we were driven, sort of to go back to our homes and shots were followed, a lot of them were killed on the way. Like, this year, my father, and as we were split up because we were not together there, and my father was running in another direction and since he was a military trained person, he knew how to go on his stomach and so on, to get out of the fire's way and he, when we came home, everybody was there but my father and we took it for granted for that night that probably he was killed. However, in the morning, he made his way to meet us and it was a joyful thing that my father was not killed, and he told us that story. So, yes. The first day of greeting, we found other casualties, the rabbi of the city and a lot of people from the, from one type of synagogue near the house, were driven with their shawls, or , as we call it, to the area where we had a lake. We did not have a river in Ostrav mazofyetsky, but lake. At the lake there, there were lined up German cars,

that they were asked to wash them with their shawls and then afterwards they were asked to go through. They did not know how to swim, so some of them drowned, you know, we knew right there. And when they came out, they were beaten. So, there were begin some casualties really known. We again found out that now, in order to, you cannot buy anything so there was lines lined up near the bakery in order to get bread. And soon enough, the police, the local police, which it was organized with arm bands. And the Germans started to pull the Jews out of the lines that the Jews cannot stay in line for bakery goods, to get. So, yes. We immediately knew the expectations to a wait; that it will not get better but it will only bet worse. And it was a matter of when.

Q: What happened next?

A: The next thing that had happened, a local government came in there. By that particular time, it was about a week later already into the war and the following the holidays it was already , which as you know, it follows Rosh Hashana, Yom Kipper, and five days later, Sucot (ph). And the family decided to go back. We went back part, my father, I, and a few more. We were afraid to move, to touch the merchandise that was there because it would have been confiscated. However before that happened, I must not forget to tell an incident that a rumor had it that leather, shoe leather was hidden someplace because the Poles used, at that time, cooperated very easily with the Germans and the German demands were met. So if sometimes, they knew who the merchants were and who what, and they were aware that a lot of people were hiding their goods because they were afraid in case, so they couldn't find it and we, for what it's worth, that's my grandparents, both of them, my father and I were among the 10 or 12 hostages that were lined up again and they said if somebody's not going to tell them about where the shoe leather is hidden, we will be shot dead. So the first time in my life, I had the fear of being almost lined up against the wall. Luck was with us that the building next to us, the leather was discovered and we were let to go home. So, sort of to speak it, you were counting your blessings. So the second time that ever it happened that we were lined up, that we came out whole as far as the family, no casualties. But there were casualties already there. The chores immediately had started. The Jews had to line up on the outside in a given place and from there cleaning the streets and so on was the kind of work that we were ordered to do. And, of course, let me not forget to say it was without pay, for pay the billing was in order. And we decided at that particular time we had to have a paper that allowing us because without a paper who knows who could happen on the way? So we managed to get a paper, as refugees, that we were running, during the war to return back to our place. And, the Germans gave, not the Germans but the local, from the local area we got there. And we were on our way back. And on the way back, every time we were traveling, we were stopped by the Germans and they made us get off from the wagon and start to look but we did not, we did not yet had anything to be heard, until we neared one place, a village, I think it was, maybe, I would say maybe 20 kilometers from our city. In that village lived one of our relatives and he had a store, a general type store and we found out, because we stopped to find out what to do, we found out that they already had a small massacre of the Jews and his family was among them and the store was no longer

in his hands because it was confiscated. So we found out a little bit of mishap on the family right on the way there. No sooner had we got to Ostralinka, back to our home, our home was not robbed or anything like that; it was still there because the rest of the people in the building were there, so it was sort of like was somebody to watch it. So once we were there, again the chores started, the same as over there. My father was ordered and they put him into jail for a day because he was cleaning. That was the main chores that Jews were given to do, street cleaning or any of the office buildings and so on. And we noticed at that particular time in Ostralinka that it was less of an uprising, less going on than in Lostravmozavensky, which we found out later the reason. The Soviets were only at that particular time sharing the city, so one part of the city at the other end, one day the Soviets would come in, the other day the Germans. So we took it as an interpretation that since the Soviets were part over there, the Germans did not try to act out in the same way as they did for instance in Lostravmozavensky. That was never supposed to be belonging to the Soviets so they had a more free hand. That went on for another few days while we were in town until one day, it was still the Jewish holidays of Soco (ph), the second days, so the, it was placed notices all over town that within ten hours, the Jews are to leave. Officially it said you could take all the belongings that you want. In our case, since we had a horse and wagon, so there were three of them so we shared it among the family and besides the furniture, we tried to manage to take some of our clothing and so on and to leave with that. Immediately, the same day, the Poles from farming and the other places came into the houses and they were not asking, "Do you sell it?" or anything, but they took the furniture out of the house. So our house was emptied out of furniture within a few hours. And there was known to stop them. We tried to open up the store and maybe muster to get a few, some money out of it, of whatever it is, and no sooner we opened up the door to our store, a Polish person brought the Germans here. The Germans start to ask who the owners is, I was there with my uncle. As soon as we realized the questions, we took the first chance and run away from there, back home, and that was the end. So in other words, that was confiscated. So however, the other part in hiding was, still in Lostravmozavetsky, where I and a cousin of mine, in a few months, almost two months later, make a chance and cross the border with the horse and wagon, dressed as farmers and we make an attempt, the Germans almost caught up with us and we salvaged some merchandise from there, from the hiding place, which it gave us an ability with, money-wise, to have for the first winter that we were over there. And it's a long story to tell until we get there.

Q: I have one question. I'm a little confused. These two towns, were they close to each other, because you seem to go back and forth a bit?

A: 40 kilometers, which, in our miles-way, we were talking about 20 miles. So you must understand, 20 miles driving with a car is nothing, but with a horse and buggy, it would take, with the horse and buggy, you know, it would take a few hours which you would be there.

Q: But, you seem to have the freedom to choose between these two places to go back and

forth?

A: When do you talk about, in the first days of the war? Yes. Until we were sent out from our city, you needed to have a piece of paper, that in other words, you were permitted. So once you had a permit, you were stopped. They checked the permits but you could move about.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: How long did it take before certain decrees or rules were implemented by the Germans and Poles?

A: Okay. All the German forerunners were on motorcycles. That's how they were, that was their infantry, starting with motorcycles and then trucks and so on and armor would follow them. Immediately, their crews would post posters on lighting poles or whatsoever, wherever posters could be posted, telling the new ordinance, what it is: A. That it was curfew hours. B. That the Jews must be identified and must carry identification and in the early part, at least in our city, we were supposed to wear a band with the Mark of David, with the Star of David on it. And it was told immediately if one is caught, they will be shot. That was for anything that one violates, violating the curfew was shot. It was immediately declared that Jews cannot walk on sidewalks. So, the identity was the arm band and you must not walk on the sidewalk; you must walk just on the streets. And the same story was, in reading on further, one would know that Jews no longer can attend any schools, Jews can no longer own any businesses, Jews no longer have rights and that was stating according to the rules of Nuremborg. Therefore, for the time being, the ghetto was not erected as yet, that was not talked about as yet, but they always must report every morning to their assigned places for the assigned work there. So in the first days of entry, when everyone got out of their hiding places, running away from the bombings, they were faced immediately with the rules and arm bands affixing and so on.

Q: Did you always follow those rules?

A: Oh, yes. One did not try to there because we saw the consequences how easily it was for a German to draw his pistol and even without anything, can be just target practice and there wasn't a day or anyplace, as soon as they came in, that killings were not going on. And they were not re meditated; they just a lot of times were out of laughter. And I've seen with my own eyes where a mother and her child were target practice, to shoot, to see that one bullet should kill both of them at one time. And it was not to save a bullet, but it was just that the rest of the Germans would laugh, you know what I mean, you would see a scene much rather than a murder being committed.

Q: What were the Poles doing?

A: Well, the Poles at that particular time, please understand, immediately remained as, those who worked in offices were left working in offices. Those who were formerly in the police, a lot of them escaped for fear and a lot of them were drafted to the services, so a new police force was being organized. Also they were carrying bands to identify the police. So the Poles were pretty much back to their normal lives, whatever they had to do, you know toying around with a new regime, you know. But the important thing was, as a Jew, immediately your businesses were confiscated, you know, and if you had lived

someplace in a nice area, it was nothing to hear new that you were pushed out. But, as I said, that was in Lostrovmozavetsky, in the first few days; but we came to Ostravlinka as I for mentioned before, things were a little bit different and not so rapidly, due to the fact that we were sharing the Soviets on the other side and the town and one did not know that they may not occupy the whole town. So, therefore it was a little bit easier. So when it happened, it happened to us rapidly; ten hours and the Jews must leave the town. When we came to the borderline with bayonets they went through our belongings and if like pillows, you saw feathers fly everywhere, so in other words, and if it's anything valuable, they tried, nobody dared to carry open gold or rings or anything like that, because that was confiscated on you there. So then, you would still get a few biddings and go to the borderline. And there was a no-man's land shortly in that part than over on the other side. In our group, the family, my grandmother, my mother's father, he spoke Russian yet because he knew to write and to read Russian. So he served at that particular time for us as the interpreter and we crossed over on the Russian side.

Q: Now, at what point did you decide to go over on the Russian side?

A: It was not a decision at what point. As I said, when the posters were posted that this is declared to be a city of the Third Reich, according to the Nuremburg laws, a Jew was not permitted to dwell in the Third Reich. So we were given ten hours, as I said, to move out. So, as I said, we had ten hours to leave and we had two choices to make: either to go, as we called it at that time, Congress Poland, which it means out of our city to any other place, or we could cross the border to the Soviets. The Soviet border was remained open for all who wants to cross and to come there. That was the part that it helped a lot of people be saved or rather, that it saved their lives crossing like my family did. And that we went on the other side.

Q: Okay. Continue on. Where did you go?

A: Okay. We went to a city 36 kilometers from our city called Lunja (ph). And from there, about another 15 kilometers or so was a city called Yedvobno (ph). Yedvobno translated from Polish to English would be silt; the silt city, Yedvobno. In that little town, our family probably from the shakot (ph) to the rabbi to anybody else was somehow related, you know; second cousin, third cousin. And the family sort of found ways to get situated among all that family. So even if it was only one room that it was given to go in there. And immediately, we had to register with the police ask so on and so forth. And youngsters were asked to go back to school because it was September, and the school year was disrupted for a little while. School had started. I enlisted in school at that particular time, again. Since Russian was not my language, but I had to study so instead of coming in according to my education, I should have at least come into the tenth class because the Russian had a ten-year school. I came in at the ninth with an examination because on everything I tested but Russian and I was back into school and it started a new life, sort of, in a way feeling of joy, even though everything was left behind and all of a sudden we were supposed to be the proletariat. And of course, the identity that my

father was a businessman was a shameful thing to say, shameful enough that you could have been arrested and sent to Siberia which the bad thing for one, which like it happened to some of the family, turned out to be good wishes for later, because it since they were sent to Siberia, they survived the war without a lot of these problems that the rest of us had to go through, those who survived. So, at that particular time, started a new life. I, as a young person, was starting again like all young people used to get together after school in the evening and it was the Russian system, which they called "Dacadumcrasne ami" (ph), which it means the house of the Red Army. And the Red Army used to supply dances, sort of in playing, and it was, you know, that was part of their propaganda, how Stalin cares for the youth and Stalin loves us. And all of a sudden, a new life had started, to listen to politicians talking and voicing opinions that we should learn the constitution of the Soviet Union and that they came to liberate us and so on. It was a new lexicon for me and many of us to indulge and I remember it was influenced on me as a young person; after all, I was only 17, going into my 18th year of life and everything coming on so fast. So, I remember when I used to come home, starting to talk politics with my father and tell him the wrongs, the way he was doing before, without realizing, and my father told me, "Wait, son. While you're in school and you come home, you have a clean bed and you have food to eat. It's very nice for you to talk of it. But, when the day will come that you will have to earn your living, you will see who is wrong." Because my father, and the rest of the family, first being religious, second they were against communism or socialism to begin with and it was sort of life at a time rolled back to working with them, being school influenced on one side, and being influenced on the other side. For me, I felt good, that no longer I have to go and go attending religious upbringing and so on. So as I lot of youngsters, you choose what it's easier and better. And especially, you come at night, and you go out with all the boys and girls and it's dancing, it was sort of a different life without knowing. And you know, that was, that's blind thing that it was put up. Before long I joined even an organization called Soviehem (ph); it was a sports organization so you get involved in sports and it didn't take long, when we were asked to take our passports and after then we took out the passports, things became a little bit more strict. We were restricted as we cannot live 100 kilometers from the border which that city of Vadlov (ph) was less than a hundred kilometers, you know, to the border, so therefore as refugees, we had to start moving. So the first time winter we through there, come spring, new problems had started even on the Soviet side. Now we had to leave all this family, leave all the people that you knew and move to at least a hundred kilometers away. We choose, Galestov (ph), for instance, was the big center. Big centers were forbidden for these displaced persons to live in there and we had to . That's how it happened that we came to the Ratchen (ph). The Ratchen was a city that it was far enough from the borderline and we were permitted. However to get housing, was again another problem over there. They were not prepared to take in this many refugees.

Q: One question before you tell me more about the . Were you able to continue practicing your religion? Were you able to be a Jew under Soviet occupation?

A: I would say that even at the time, if it was not officially restricted at first, and we are

talking about not even a year there, but people were understanding of the circumstances so they did, after escaping the Germans, everything that the Soviets had to offer was good. So, therefore, instead of violating the rules so people, yes, did practice in hiding. It was another way like we were for instance, which I didn't tell at the beginning, on the first day of Rosh Hashana, that we descended in a cellar at that time, and my grandfather at that time, and on the top, going down to the cellar on the top we put on a piece of the furniture so it should not be visible in the event the Germans come in to see. And I spoke to my grandfather at that time and I say, "Now I understand what they went through in Spain, in the year the Jews were practicing." And he says, "Be quiet my son. Don't talk now. Pray to God maybe we'll survive." So, that's how deep the religion was in these people. They saw only one way out of it was through religion. So, now when we're on the Soviet side, they did practice religion but no longer did I have the discipline that my father would ask me, "Did you pray this morning?" Because I went to school again and he realized that I'm becoming brain washed with something different so it was sort of a "Don't talk. Don't tell. Don't ask," situation that I was brought into to live in the new life. And, as I started to say at the outset, getting situated in the regimen was not an easy task. For instance, a whole family moved into one single room next door to a guy who is making harnesses for horses and so on. And that room used to be his workman place. But it looks like all the bitterness became sweet and everything was well. After all, as I said, for the first winter, the merchandise that I and my cousin being risked our lives and brought it in, lasted for that time. But all of a sudden, everybody had to get work. My father, since he still had the horse and wagon and that gave him a good way hiding than he was not a businessman but he was a working man, earning a living through that. So now, he used to do with his horse and wagon taking some merchandise from, which they used to call it Soluzatil (ph) which it was scrap metal and so on, and he would have to take it to another city to bring it in to the big warehouse. So he had a job for this year and that helped him to do black marketeering while under the cover of this merchandise that he had. He would go ahead and smuggle like saccharin maybe, and other things like that. So, when you were going to Sloyen (ph), you would take along some eggs, butter, whatever it is to trade. There was no money. Trading was the important thing, and come over there, buy flints for instance, for lighters. That was a big thing because matches were in a scarce place; getting sole, which it was a very scarcity item or sugar. So, it was a matter of black marketing. It was against the law. If you were caught with it, five year jail was the term. But need and the necessity to go on does not get scared by five years imprisonment, you know. And we went on and at times, at first I still was in school, didn't get involved. So I tried to go ahead and listen to what they told me in school and I involved myself to become a working man. And school at that particular time taught you and they kept saying that no matter what we do, we must go ahead to do work. And I registered to go to Galistog (ph) to a place and I wind up in a place were they were building actually housing for the soldiers. And as a youngster I never did this kind of work before and there I have to take the wood barrels and fill them. After a couple of weeks of work, I thought I'm going to collapse and I returned back home. I got a permit and I returned back home and I had to find another job. My father at that particular time was afraid continuing with the work that he was doing over there, so we decided we are

going to go to the forest; which, this going to the forest would build up the future later, serving as a base, that I knew the roots of how to escape from the ghetto, although we didn't do it with that in mind, but it turned out to be, yesterday's bad things turned out tomorrow's safety and so on. So we came there, over there with a horse and wagon. We were loading trees that were cut down and taking them from one place to the other. The other part behind it was that we worked close to the farmers so we could deal with the farmers and that black marketeering was still a part and before long, my father's influence worked on me that I got involved doing the black marketeering in the same way alongside of him. And for a while, we thought that it couldn't be any better because the shortage of food was no shortage to us. We always had enough food to bring home; not luxury food, you know, good food that we wanted, but food was around the table, you know. So you had bread, you had butter, you had cheese. You were able to get a chicken even though you couldn't get your steaks and so on, but you could have a chicken and so on. And was the other problem was at that time with kosher slaughter. Kosher slaughter became a problem. I did not go into the political part of it, to tell you of Poland before the war. I don't know how much to tell or how much you can give me the time to tell, but talking about kosher slaughter, even through 1937, through a woman by the name of Pristo, Madam Pristo, and she served in Polish Congress. And she was a humanist. She said that killing an animal, as the kosher slaughter was, takes too much time for the animal to be dead; therefore, we were doing an inhumane thing to the animal. So therefore, kosher slaughter should be forbidden. It stirred up a tremendous out pour throughout Poland because the Polish constitution of 1918, when they gained independence, and Pilsutsky (ph) at that time being the head, and since the Jews saved his life, he owed a debt to the Jews and he kept all these anti-Semites (ph) in place. He couldn't stop them altogether, but he, like a dictator, kept it undercover and control. The Jews had elective officials, even to the same as they were called the same, Senate, house of Congress, as you would call it, you know, and the Senate. And the law, and it posed tremendous protest. But I blame the Jewish leadership for not coming up at that time immediately to squelch all of this here that in turn led to the officials handling black candles and they called a fast that we have to fast and punish ourselves so that God will help us, that this bad law will be change. Well, we know the outcome, that it didn't. And the hypocrisy worked on me even as a youngster. Because why? Instead of forbidding the kosher slaughter, we were given a contingency; in other words, you can kill so many so that, in its, tells the wrongs. If it is right to kill 100 pieces of cattle, why is it wrong to kill 150 or 200. So in it, one so blatantly, that anti-Semitic out burst against the Jews, even though they were constitutionally protected, that it's a part of religious ritual to do. So know, on the Soviet side, all people who are before, remembered this here case and no one sort of dared to make an issue of it. However, kosher slaughter still went on in hiding, as sort of to speak that if you want a chicken to be slaughtered properly kosher, you could, there was somebody who would do it for you. But, it sort of, since the towns were small and the NKVD as we called it at that time, or KGB did not penetrate so much and the local people were working in the government so some how rather, it was "Hey, I don't see it." And, of course, in many instances, you paid off for all of these goodies doing it in the say way. So, religiously, again, which it was a big upheaval for people like

in my family at that particular time. And I as a youngster, did not feel the hurt so much because I was young and foolish as the saying would be, not understanding tomorrow, you know, what it is going to bring on us later. So, as I said, I already got the taste of the coming Soviet working and being privileged to find out at that particular time, that in the Soviet Union, workmanship was by right; in other words, the bricklayer did not earn as much money, or maybe more money as the guy who was mixing the cement. So, it was not the Soviet system of socialism but it was again, capitalism. In the capitalistic system, we know there are different rates of pay, even for the same work. So, I began to get a little doubt in the system to what is going on. And that was own a year and a half on this sort of living conditions. I still was in school and I came back from Devon (ph) back into school and all of this kind of life lasted, as I said; with working in the forest and doing all the means. And at that particular time, I used to talk to my family, why don't they try to go ahead, go move further east, but their mind was that the work cannot be a lasting one, that the war should be over and we'll be able to return back to the area that we had to run away from. However, the 22nd of June, all of the dreams of yesteryears became too evil for that same day.

Q: 1941?

A: 1941, the 22nd of June, Hitler attacked. I don't want to have to put it in, but maybe we have to. If anyone's seen on television not so long ago, it was brought the story back to life, the way Stalin was forewarned about all the things that Hitler was going to attack but it did not want to listen to and he even went away and executed some guys, calling them propagandists and until the war broke out, he didn't want to believe that that would be the case. That's a point I want inserted because it's a true fact, the way it was. He began to see it immediately. The local population then, in that city, Rachen (ph), that I was, we were hiding from the bombings, when the Germans attacked and they kept saying they wished the Germans would come in already. And after us telling them we already experienced the Germans, I hope that the Russians shouldn't lose and be able, because at that particular time it was a few days the Soviets, a few days the Germans, until it was settled. Because within ten days at that particular time, it had reached almost near to be the Mensk (ph), you know, and Hitler at that particular time was the blitz, it was named, that he'll be in Moscow within ten days. And he almost succeeded, you know, to be there. So things began to turn real fast in a different way. Again, at this time, in '41, like it happened in '39, the first thing when the Germans sent it in the Rachen, the Jews were called to meet on the place in the center. The center of the city of small towns, like in most cases in the United States also, have also, you know, they call it the plaza over there, what we call the marketplace or whatever. So that was usually the center for the Jews to be gathered. And they drove us out over there and, again, if you want to call it a miracle be it; to me it is a miracle but it happened. While a man, a German uniform went out and spoke to us in perfect Russian and he was a, I believe a captain, if higher, spoke to us in perfect Russian and started to tell us about the new law and all of us were searched and if anybody has jewelry or anything like that. So, we had a taste right away early to put it up and all of a sudden while we were there, looks like, you know, a piece

of artillery that it was the wrong way, hit the corner part of the church and when that hit and another one followed, the Germans started it and they were being attacked now, so we were dismissed. But the machine guns were surrounding us at the time. We were not there to listen to speeches. We were there to follow through. They started to segregate all doctors needs to go to one side; you know, the right and left, if you ever heard about it, that's what, we were a part of it. To the right, to the left; no one knew whether the right line is the right line or it is the wrong line, you know, to go. And you had no choice about it. They would go ahead and look, right, left, and every time they was said, was always with a and that saved us, that explosion from this here artillery piece and all of a sudden the Germans were starting to run around like mice and we were returned back to our houses. Until a couple of days later, the front line started to come for fuller, the Soviets, whatever was left, retreated and that was when life under the occupation with the Nazis began. A Univad (ph) was formed in the city. A Univad means actually a government -- it was not appointment. It wasn't even elected but then, we would line up. He would point the finger to one, he would go out to the right or to the other one and they would appoint about maybe ten people. Then they told them, "You are the Univad," and they said, "You are going to be the president and this is where we'll begin to have a government," and a ghetto was formed. So, for the first time, a new life starts again, ghetto; which it meant they mapped out a few blocks of the city which could house only probably a tenth or maybe less than a tenth of the population, and it was with barbed wire surrounded all the way around, with doors and we had the police, the local police which they assigned to; it used to be on the outside. The Germans could always go inside to the police, but the restriction was for farmers or Gentiles to go inside the ghetto. We could only go out with a "shine" as they used to say in German; in other words, a paper which was a permit and groups used to be started in the morning. We would line up near the Univad; these ones are going, those are the carpenters. They're going to do carpentry work. Those are the electricians, going for electrical work. The other ones we'll send to cleaning the various types of offices or the streets or whatever ensued later, like it was winter for instance, to go to clean the snow.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

A: . . . arithmetic of the case, since Jews were only 10 percent of the population, how come so much anti-Semitism could reach. (Another speaker, unintelligible.) Amoshik (ph). So it could not be right. (Another speaker; "They wouldn't have to kill anybody.") It means the three half million people, all turned onto families. The families, let's say make it 3 or 4 per family, so it would be a fourth of that would have been. So they should have been. . .

Q: I think you were talking about (unintelligible)?

A: Life in the Rachen (ph) on the occupation and with the ghetto and Univad (ph) in full swing, brought new problems and killings day by day. They were not killings because they were called for, but it was the criteria I have aforementioned. If a policeman wanted to have fun, he killed a Jew. Or, when he was working something and if he did not work as fast as the policeman told him to do, that was a good way to basically not shoot him, but beat him to death. So everyday used to go on in the same. I had in the ghetto with me a brother to my father who he was, in part, responsible for helping me with my religious education and he was a graduated rabbi. We still used to, by his demands, when I would come from work and we used to sort of talk about the Torah, a little bit here and then the other. All of that was very distasteful at the time to me, but I loved him enough to listen to him. He's the man at that particular time came to me since maybe I didn't mention, and I use that word, "ota defid" (ph), you know what I'm referring to? That's a French saying for "burning" and that was sort of burning on display. All religious scripture, be the Torah, be books and everything, were ordered by the Germans to be making in a bonfire which they had burned it. They were so scared for knowledge that people could be aware that this was, again, a part of showing to the Jew which it belonged to a part of the de-humanization program. Because, you must remember that we went through certain stages. As I have aforementioned before, the laws of Nuremburg were the first laws to give them the guide. And in these laws, a Jew was not a human. A Jew loss all his rights and therefore he was a person without rights. So, the same as I have aforementioned before, when the ghetto started, it was the same thing. Inside the ghetto, a Jew could walk every place. But even by marching to work or doing your chores that you were ordered to do, the sidewalk was forbidden for a Jew to walk on. So,

Q: You mean outside? ?

A: Outside of the ghetto. Even while you were doing your duty. The only time he could walk out was when he had a broom in his hand and sweeping the sidewalk so therefore. But otherwise, this was forbidden for Jews to walk on those sidewalks. Every time you saw a German, a Jew was asked that he must salute him and say "Good morning" and so on. If you didn't, that was good enough cause for the Germans to beat you, kill you, or whatever it is because we had no rights, so he did not have to bring in front of the court or anything like that. You were executed on the spot. Quite often when the killings went on, I would come home and talk to my uncle and say, "Look, I'm very despondent today.

I've seen a child being molested and killed." Or, "I've seen another instance where that happened." And basically, that was, then the dig. They started to do a dig at that particular time in the outskirts of the town. A pit big enough for a truck, mind you, to go around and turn. And that ultimately was supposed to be the burial places that was intended for the ghetto, but it did not happen that way because of the Protestants in the area, which I'm going to get to a little bit later, when we get to talk about the Protestants. But, right now, I'm only trying to touch base with life and what went on, the kind. Let's say when the winter came, a lot of Jews were killed and lost by sending them to go ahead to clean the snow. And they did not have the proper equipment. The Germans didn't provide shovels, it was our job that we, the Univad (ph) of the Jews had to have shovels. And to get tools at that time, it wasn't like you go into a store and buy it. You paid dearly through the local population to get it for you because Jews could not travel around and go to purchase things. So, in order to purchase things, that's what you had to do, the outside connection. Another thing which I do not want to leave out: the creation of the Univad, a new thing and a new word began to make its place. The word was called "contribution" . Now, in the normal language when we use a contribution in the United Nations United States, we talk about a donation. You contribute something to a welfare, to a cause. That word "contribution" was done exactly opposite; that was a punishment. In other words, it means the Univad could be called and was beat up to the office of the Gestapo and they were given an order that within, for instance, ten hours for so, this community, this ghetto is to write one kilogram of gold. They did not care whether you had the gold, but if you didn't have the gold, they wanted a kilogram of gold. Maybe they were successful to bring 14 ounces; they accepted the 14 ounces, and but on another contribution, which in other words. So, little by little, all the laws began to be of that nature. Jews cannot wear leather shoes. Jews cannot wear any leather clothing. So, in other words, all of this type; if you had boots or you had shoes with leather, you had to turn that in. So all of this here was the part of the dehumanization program and the part of breaking us morally and shy away how to resist the enemy, you know. So you haven't got this and you haven't got that and you can't get the others and before long, and we used to have to come every morning and stay in line to receive the amount of ounces of bread prescribed. In other words, it wasn't a matter that you go out to buy, but it was a bakery and the Jews used to be delivered bread and the bread was not made of flour. If you heard stories that were, you know, putting in sanding from the wood, you know, things like this. It was true. It was like that. And that the Jews had to pay for it. Labor, you didn't get paid. So you used to go through all of this here, stay in line to get the ration for the day of bread. So food became a problem, and talking about smuggling was again an issue. Since my brother used to know the farmers, that he used to speculate before with the Russians, now he used to, as a child it was easier; he was four years younger than I was, so we split up at that particular time. I was with the family of my father's and my brother, my two brothers and my sister went to live together with my grandfather. My grandfather on the father's side was dead; he died already. But my grandfather from my mother's side was still alive and he was there. So he was together with his son and his wife already was dead, left a child behind and then he had the three children, his grandchildren. So my brother used to be the one who would steal his way out and if my uncle would find

something that he should give him to trade for food, he would go. And as a kid, but he was very well equipped to be able to do it because necessity at a time mother of invention and since we had to make the life of black marketeering, you know, that's what it was. I did not tell you this point, that at this time in my life my father was no longer alive here. As I aforementioned before, that my father used to go ahead and carry on the sayuzatil (ph) which is I said metal scraping, to he used to have to go to Slonum (ph) with it, a big city from the Rachen (ph), and in the meanwhile he used to be able to take passengers along who would pay him money and they were also black marketeers. So it happened in that winter of 1942. Now, I got to be careful; not the winter of '42. It was the winter before the Germans; it was the winter of 1940. So while he was traveling to Slonum, at that time was a big snow, we had maybe 10 to 12 inches of snow. And halfway, the horse couldn't pull the sled anymore because he was sinking, like there was no route yet made, so he decided to come back. A friend of his who is still alive in Israel today, who was the firsthand story to tell me how it happened, so he decided to come back. And he came back; I jumped up from my bed listening. It was something terrible to hear, you know, that he came back. I was wondering what it is. And he told me that it is impassable, the road, and he decided to come back. He was a hauset (ph), like I say, in a lot of Hasidic way, prejudiced about some of these here things. For instance, you don't go back the same way; if you forgot something in the house and you came out to get it, they wouldn't go back the same way. They got to go back the other way. So why do I say that? Because two of the passengers kept insinuating (sic), "Why don't we go back?" Instead of being the wall behind the sled, and if the horse stops, you help him. And some how or other, my father listened to their pleas and he decided to go back. So afterwards it happened when the horse got stuck, it did not have a whip on it or anything like that. He went over to the first tree, broke off a branch and came over and the horse wouldn't pull and he hit him, the horse, and the horse pulled up his left foot and hit him right in this part (point to his head) which actually, the way the doctor told me later, he busted an inside artery, you know, and he was bleeding internally. When he came back for the second time from the turn and he was already laying, crying, I immediately took him to the hospital with calling the doctor. And the doctor told me that it would be the best cure for him if we could get him to Slonum (ph) to a hospital because he'll need surgery; he's bleeding internally. He was a strong man, my father, that he could hold pain. And no matter how much effort by morning I tried, that the Red Army should take him with the ambulance to the other city. No matter how much influence I tried to use, and I did not have the influence to take him and within 24 hours, he was dead. So I had the second personal tragedy awaiting me after all this year that now my father remarried after my mother's. He remarried in 1938 and here we're talking about three years later, that we thought that it was a good thing it happened to us because the stepmother, she was very good to my younger brother and the others, and my sister, and the house began again to be in order. So we were very appreciative to it. And as I aforementioned, I, at the time, thought that I'm going to leave for the United States, and I couldn't. So know it looks like trouble followed trouble, one after the other. So this time, while we are there and we're doing all this here black marketing, my father is dead now. But the family's got to go on. His father was still alive and he was so proud of me that I can go and keep the family together. It

looks like he couldn't die until I would be back. On his dying bed, he kept on talking, "Where's Harold?" And, it's when I came back, I used to travel by night and came that morning. My stepmother said to me, "You better hurry to see grandpa; he's in bad shape and he keeps asking." I came to his bed and he was hardly breathing but he recognized me, hugged me and within a few minutes, he was dead. We had a clinic across the street where my grandpa was living at that time, the Soviets, and I called the doctor. He was in right away and it was all over. So both of my grandparents were fond of me in many ways. Now, this grandfather from my mother's side had his love for me in another way. And with him, he was behaving well until one day, he wanted to go commit suicide. And suicide, by Jews, religious Jews, is a no-no. He couldn't take all that was going on. He couldn't take his life, his religion. So somebody stopped and they saw what he was doing, that he was trying to cut his arm and they started yelling and then my uncle got him back home and we started to calm him down. But, the man lost his and he couldn't go out. All of that took place until I was taken to concentration camp. The story starts like that.

Q: I just wanted to get a sense of time for clarification. This is, was, all of these episodes you're talking about prior to the ghetto being formed?

A: What I said about my grandfather was prior to the ghetto being formed. My father's father, when he said he couldn't die until I was to his bed, now I'm talking about my other grandfather who also was fond of me and he, looks like, wanted to commit suicide by not being able to see life what had been ensuing in the ghetto. You follow me now? Because, in the ghetto, as I told you, my brother would risk his life and go out to get a little food to keep for them going. I had to go working and a few times then round ups were, by that time I already built a hide out in the ghetto.

Q: Let me ask you a few questions about the ghetto. How did your brother get back and forth?

A: As I say, he would steal his way out, as a kid, and you know, he was four years older than me and even the other kids. And if he would go sometimes with a line up of the people who were marched out to go to work, he would crawl in to there. And who these days, on the Jewish side, from the Univad (ph) cared that they saw another guy. They were not accountable that much, so he would go with us on that line and in the meanwhile, he would get lost.

Q: Were the Univad and the Jewish police, were they --?

A: In our ghetto, we did not have Jewish police. The Jewish police was in the bigger ghettos like Warsaw, Vilna (ph), Veilostok (ph), large, you know. But in the smaller town there, we are talking about a city right now that prior to World War -- to the outbreak of the war probably, maybe, had 3,000 people in total population. So, you know, and then there was an influx of the refugees, you know, more like the way I said that we came. At the time when the ghetto was created, some Jews escaped from other

ghettoes and they came in here. So, our ghetto, I would say from that city at that particular time, when we are talking about in the Rachen (ph) probably must have been maybe 2500 or 3,000 people of population in all. In the ghetto, there was no more than about a thousand to 1200 people.

Q: Were the members of the Univad good to you? Were they good people?

A: That's a bad question and you'll please forgive me for saying this. Serving in a Univad could never have been a good and bad question because when the Gestapo imposed that you have to deliver and they used to have to go from door to door and really knock on the table and say, "You are going to turn it over or we have to turn the house apart and you are going to have to give it if you have gold, or if you have money." You know, they were searching and doing partially before their scheme, and second of all, that was the only way you could do it in those days. It was not a matter that someone was going to go to their bank and take out, you know, what I mean, from the hiding and take out his gold or money. There was no such thing. Anything what anybody has, was told all the time in hiding, people would have buried some things that in case they're searched or anything like that. We had to go ahead to buy things from the local population or through them to satisfy the Germans. So we didn't have gold but there was money available to be gotten together, American dollars or whatever these people had it, so the means was that the Germans did not look for us to better ourselves. They would come at the worst, they can make how much more miserable in the ghetto could become. And this was part of the, as I used that word, the dehumanization program that it went out to suck, like to say sucking our blood. Picture when you cannot wear, the men cannot wear -- the fur that men used to wear was inside fur. I'm not talking about the people of old Mensk (ph), you know, but the average person. Used to take from a lamb skin this part if it was a healthy one, so he had it to the outside finished, you see, and so it was sewn in things and it was decorative and so on. But the poor guy had something else, a fur lining in there to keep him warm because that was a good item to keep away from the cold. Now you had to turn all of that in. So, what I did, I had a piece of fur in a car coat and I took that and sewed on a lining to cover it. Sure you tell me, Harold, what would happen if they would discover it? If they discovered me with it, I'm dead. I ran away to the forest with that thing. But, you have a risk to life. This is why I still say to this day, not only were we heroes in the forest, everyone in the ghetto, everyone in concentration camp who managed to survive, is a hero because that was exactly anti- what Hitler wanted. So no matter by what means, that one could prolong life and survive, that is the heroism that the people of our stature like myself. Sure, I am happy that I went to the forest and had the opportunity to lead a platoon and to go ahead and do diversionary work like burning bridges, downing railroads, as I get to it a little bit later. But every time I could, of not giving the enemy what they wanted out of me, I already was a hero at that time. And so, getting killed; sure. That's what the meaning was. That's what we were waiting for. And the people of sound sense knew about the time that we had. However, a lot of people in the ghettoes still believed that a miracle or something will happen and they will be able to survive. But, those who are hoping for the survival to come, like this here, did not survive. Those

who acted in no means or ways, we would have run away, did whatever they did, survived. No 100 percent, but a bigger percentage survived and that's what it was the case. So, as I was saying at that particular time, I, my little family was split and my brother was helping out. He was the helping hand there. And then one morning, which I had that chapter in my own manuscript, the 33 pages. And I called it my "Escape to the Forest" and I want to tell you in detail right now how that came about until I came to the forest.

Q: Okay. I want you to tell me all that, but I just want to ask you a little bit more about the ghetto?

A: Good. You go ahead. You're commanding me and I'm listening.

Q: Within this ghetto, I know it wasn't a big place like Lojur (ph) and Warsaw. Was there any semblance of normal life, in terms of friendships or activities? I'm trying to get a sense of what it was like living there?

A: Okay. The important thing, the life, for instance, picture yourself at a house, for instance, of European standard, at the area where I'm referring to. A house consisted of maybe two or three rooms. Now, these two or three rooms, if a family was living there with 3 or 4 kids, was not accommodating, as you know. Picture that same house now, putting in ten families. Now, you picture ten families, ten families cramped into a place like that. Somebody's going to pick on someone. "How come you snore?" "How come you keep waking up in the middle of the night?" So therefore, when you say, when you use that word normal, that's a word impossible to refer to at that era because that's what the Nazis planned. Then you are going to be so cramped in, you're not going to be able to live with each other. And that's what they want. Therefore, you cannot unit; therefore you cannot do all these things like that. So, during the day men and women were out at work and it was not bad. But, at night, can you picture; it's like sardines in the cans. Kids, no kids, everything was together. There wasn't a question. Even if there was one kitchen, I mean one part, and if somebody could go ahead to boil some water. It was all tragedy; where do you get the wood to use to make, you know, the firewood. To have to prepare everything became a problem. And know, who's going to be first to use, if they had some things. If they had some food, they had to hide it because somebody will take it. They did not take it with a gun or a stick; they'll take it one way or the other. So all of this here, to use that word as I said before, the Univad; no, the Univad was not made to please the Jews. The Univad was a sign for the Germans to have a conduit between them and every dweller in them and they would put out the clothes, for instance they needed to have a count. Everyday they had to present a count. And when somebody died, to go ahead and take them for burial, again, that was all going through. There was one thing about it, they did keep good records, the Germans, and they knew. However we out smarted them. No ghetto ever had the amount of Jews in there. It always had less in their ways. So therefore, I'm coming to what I said. Food was the big problem to cause and why it was because we knew it from here and from the other. There are too many Jews in this so they

have to kill. So when they killed out, just for the sake of talk, if a thousand people were, according to the accounting, was over there with the Nazis and they killed out 500, all of a sudden if you were to take a head count, really, you'd find out there was probably 700 to 800. So, how many to keep up the lease and how to keep that, was never a factual thing that everybody knew. But everyone looking around him could see from another ghetto that all of a sudden we had another few people that was not here. So, it was dog eat dog and everybody was not telling the truth to each other because you couldn't. Everybody shivered; they were scared for their own head. You never knew when it was. And on the other hand, it's very hard for me to make a person understand how we did not become insane and all of us lose our senses, to kill ourselves off first. Do you follow me? When I came to New York in March of 1948 and I gathered with my wife to the family, until 2 o'clock in the morning when I told them. The question came, "So, how did you survive?" and, "Since it was so terrible, did you tell us a story or, we believe what you told us is true, so how did you survive?" And this is the miracle. If you believe in miracles, every survivor survived by way of a miracle. He was not that smart; he was not that schooled. He had plans and that helped him survive. If you have a more questions about the ghetto, I will gladly fill you in.

Q: You, so I think what you are saying is that you didn't resembled the Univad; they did what they had to do. Is that what you are telling me?

A: Absolutely. I personally, I speak for myself in this case and I hope every person who I'm saying understood them. That's why we listened and we tried to do what they wanted us to do.

Q: Another question, when we've changed take place, is were you able to practice your religion at all during the ghetto?

A: There was no such thing. I said it to you the story about my uncle. I did not get to tell you the rest of that, that by his demands, I took as we call a shatz (ph). A shatz is six of the, you know, the Homaj (ph), the Tomat (ph) and all of that, and he had all these books and I told you about the alta dufar (ph), he made me take a whole set which it was a Torrah and other religious things and I built it underneath the roof to make a double and put it in there. Again, as I aforementioned, would they find it what would they do? They would kill. But they'd kill anyways. But I pleased him to death. I liked him and I discussed with him some of the things. Like he would tell me at one time, and when I told you when I came there was killing. He said, "Look, you are a student," he said to me. "And you are a very good student. You remember what happened in Spain, that what they did to the Jews and all of that." He says, "God had an opportunity at that time to play with the Jews of Spain because they were devoted. He knew that they will not put him down. But can you imagine if the Jews of today were to give a choice, what would happen?" he said. "What would happen?" This is how much devotion he, my father, my grandfathers, all of these here people, there was no "ifs". There was, that is the way.

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

- A: I will have to come to you to tell you about my escape. This is how, we called it a selection.
- Q: Okay. If you're going to get to that, that's fine. You mentioned something that I just wanted to ask you about?
- A: Did we have that story part about hiding their religious things on the tape before? No. We didn't put it in.
- Q: Okay so, you were talking about your uncle?
- A: I often used to, after work, have discussions with my uncle, not about my wanting to, but by his making me talk. Maybe in his way, it was a means of keeping my moral going instead of down. And he would talk religious things. In one particular day that I vividly remembered, and we were working already that day about digging the big pit as I have aforementioned before. And I literally had seen on that particular day, some gross, inhumane ways of the way a policeman, because the way it used to be over there, there was maybe two Germans and maybe 10 or 12 from the police. That's the way it used to be. They used to use a couple of Germans and the local people who were drafted as policemen or so on, they were the ones. And, of course, they had the "life of Riley;" their family, nothing was done to their families but good things and all that they robbed from Jews were free for them to, for their families to have and to enjoy. So, that particular day, I had seen a if you occasions where the guy was bidding the guy at work for no other reason but just his blood-thirstiness was in him to show off to the German that he needs to be promoted because he is doing, really, the job that the Germans wanted. So, then he started beating on that particular person. It was at first, you know, the guy was starting to yell; the more the guy yelled, the harder the beating went on. So, if you could make sort of to yourself or a thing to remember; when they beat you, you perhaps don't cry so much, so they don't get the enjoyment, realizing how much you hurt. So, if you didn't cry at all, they beat you a lot; if you did cry a lot, they beat you a lot. So which way to choose? You had no way to choose. If you survived, you survived and if you didn't, you were left maybe to bleed to death or whatever it is. And then they would ask some Jews, to ask the Jews to go ahead to the burial place and the burial place could be anyplace, and put them in there, as a reward to them, they were shot and they would bring up. So sometimes it used to be going up. I remember times when they used to bring the big trucks in our area. In our area, they experimented a lot of things but few, if ever, were taken to the main concentration camps as we know, the Auschwitz, the Buchenvald (ph) or the other one. Of course, we found an uncle's brother first and he related that he was from Sladen, the city aforementioned, and he was taken among many more. So, I don't want to rule it out, so I say it the way it is. In our place, we did not know or any round ups that were made to that I them to concentration camps.

Q: Did you know about the camps?

A: We didn't. We didn't, in our area, until we did not get out of the forest, and we found out that Jews were remaining a life and they were in concentration camps. The important thing, when I use that word "dehumanization" was another part; lack of communication. The Jews could not get papers, the Jews could not hear anything. But every ghetto Univad would pay basically to send Gentiles to the Slovan (ph) ghetto or to the other ghetto to find out what's going on. What everybody wanted to do was to learn a lesson: how to survive. Unfortunately, they paid their way and the survival was not in place because what they did not ghetto in Slonya, not necessarily did they do in the ghetto in Jatel (ph) or in the Rachen or someplace else. They wanted always that surprise, that different way so Jews did not have an opportunity of surviving or resisting. They did it both ways. They used to get the round ups where all the population was driven out, even the Valde Univad was to the marketplace, and line up over there and it was the right, left, right, left idea. And one morning, that's what it was the case. And I usually knew one man in the Univad quite well because he happened to be a personal friend for many years from before the war of my father. He was a personal friend. So a lot of times when a round up used to happen, since he was in the Univad, I would go ahead to ask him whether the Univad has any knowledge what's going to take place. That round up, what it happens to be now, I've been denied before somehow or other the rumors; rumors were, all the time we were living with rumors, all the time. And the rumors one day happened.

Q: When was this?

A: That's still I'm talking about in the ghetto like before. Year, approximately again, because I escaped in 1942. So we are dealing with the era within '41 and '42, May. See, that's the interim period, that's when I'm talking ghetto life, you know. Because I escaped at that particular time, about this time of year, more or less, which is April; that's when I escaped. It was like the spring of the year. We did not have calendars, believe me, to know exactly. So I went to him, Veinstock (ph) was his name. And he says to me, Harold, you don't know anything about it. Because, I, on a number of occasions, had my hiding place where I used to not show. And therefore I wanted to know at that time, too. My horse that I had, by that time was gone already. I did not have any horse and wagon. So, I did not, I couldn't go; I had to do the different kind of chores that I did before, so I wound up at that round up in the morning. That morning they all came out. Fritz was the name of the head from the ghetto, from the Gestapo by us, and he used to be a lover of horseback riding. And he came out with a big whip in his hands. The whip they didn't use for the horse, but that whip, that used to be his best way. That was a special love affair, it looks like for them, beating a person much more than shooting or killing them. They used to have their victims done so that they begged to be dead because that's how they used to. And we were made lines and in every line, there were police in the middle. So, I mean, you had a police line in this line, you had a police line, and we were the column together. So you couldn't move or you couldn't turn and at one times that's what we were told to do and we were searched, sort of displicably, to see. And at first they would say, "Anybody

who has knives or any weapons to throw them out," you know. "If found, will be shot." We were, at that particular time, picked out approximately 350, give or take, or 400, all young people in most cases. Some middle aged people, too, the same way. When the selection, it used to be called selection, as it's known; when the selection ended, Fritz on his horse, some police and Germans on motorcycles formed a column on the side and we were told to run, who knows where? Before long, we knew we were running on the street that was leading to Slonov (ph) and of course, they were changing all the guys who were, for instance, keeping us and running alongside of us, were given a place to go into the trucks that were following and stuff like this, so they got in case we got worn out. And our guys from the running and beating each time, you would see a few guys were left on the side. Those who were left on the side were left. In other words, if some of them survived and could escape someplace is a question because behind were trucks and with the trucks, they could see and they had their machine guns tuned easily. So I don't know what happened because I was not there. What I saw, the way of the scenery went up, we were driven all the way to Slonum (ph). Slonum between the Rechen was approximately about give or take about 40 kilometers, and 40 kilometers, as I say, is less than 20 miles, but you just take and start running under the circumstances for the 20 miles and you just see what is left of that, you know. So, the majority I would say, if at all, we were left about 150 people. That would have been -- I did not count, so I don't want to put the finger, and it was given to me, but were driven into the jail in Slonov. In that jail we found people from other surrounding small towns around who were also, probably been through a similar situation. A Gestapo man came in in order to keep quiet and we shouldn't talk. That was the means, a shot was fired. "Ach tung (ph)," they yelled. And that's when the Commandant came in and he started instructions that you will be marching to work, and giving us all the stories. "Anyone of you who fails to do his job will be executed immediately at once." The next morning we were taken again, I was with a group so I don't know how many, but all the jail was empty. We were taken to the railroad. At the railroad beyond a reasonable doubt, we have seen a train, like it was partially of, maybe it was tipped over, you know, some of it. Later on, I knew what it was because I was already knowing that it was a de-railment caused by the partisans. It consisted of bombs, you know, whether they had the capsules in there, I don't know. I wasn't that kind of an expert to tell you, but they were all crated and we were asked to get all of this here back on the trains and load it up. And the yelling and beatings, the normal situation; that was the lexicon now. At night we were driven to jail again and we were given something to eat which it looked like soup and a slice of black bread. The soup was like a mixture of corn meal with water, not like this here, but as hungry as everybody was, they were ready to eat each other, you know what I'm saying? And the next morning when we got out of jail, a new assignment awaiting us, they drove us again on a road which the road was a connecting road between Slonov and a city called Lida. And on that road, near a small community town called Kovlofschezna (ph) and Puzavich (ph); it's a name you'll find on the maps. I have the maps with me at any time if you need it, with a lot more information than you think, such as how many escaped to the forest at times from ghettos and the annihilation. So if you need any of that information, I have it yet. So, over there you were put in three barns. There were three barns only; there was an

office and we saw a military kitchen. Otherwise, surrounding, it looked like everything was with barbed wire around, even if it was a labor camp. Immediately when we were lined up over there, I think there were maybe two Germans in all and it must have been Ukrainian and the other Russian police over there. They were supposed to be our watchers and so on. And after the line up, we were told that we were going to build a road. Actually, they started to build roads, you know, and that's what they did. And we were to be the -- and I don't have to tell you building roads, it's heavy work and here you were working with people who hardly got enough food to sustain themselves. So everyday there used to be casualties. So, I mean, I mention that really, before you ask me about it. There were casualties everyday. We thought, being shot, but just beating, beaten to death. One day it happened to me. I got a beating. I got a beating by the foreman, supposedly. He was a Pole and at one time when he talked to me and I'm realizing that he's Polish, I spoke to him in Polish and sort of, and he started beating on me. He says, "I have to do it. If I don't do it, I'll be beaten." Because his superiors, this is how the chain of command was. You are told that you have to so don't dare not to, because if not, you're going to get a beating. And, I was out. First out, he took water, you know the military buckets with water, poured over my head and revived me. And I came through, you know what I mean. I thought, it's just like coming through from death. Understand, I didn't believe it. He says, "Look, I didn't want to do it what I did, but I had to do it." And I thanked him yet. I said, "Thank you." He revived me, he tossed me a piece of bread afterwards and that's how my day of work ended and we came back to the barn. So, when I say a barn to you, how do you picture a barn? As you see, a barn in Europe is built a little different than the barns in the United States because here they keep, which I've seen the way it is, but in that barn there were two like layers, wood and straw, so it was a top and I bottom. Nothing to cover yourself, heavens forbid, or, you know, now we talk about mattress. That's what I told you. It was lots. And all of a sudden, you say what's going to be the case? And before long, a delegation came from the ghettos and they brought supplies. I had no one to send me supplies. I didn't have anybody. But I see and I found out, they paid off enough to let it happen. They got some soap, they got some thread, they got some salt, little things, you know what I mean like this here. I quickly got myself another friend, you know, you make association. I says, we got to survive. He was from the other side of the road from the small towns.

Q: Your brother was not with you?

A: No. No, my brother was left there yet. I'll tell you the story about my brother when it comes later. I decided we're going to go black marketeering under the eyes of them. Again, necessity is the mother of invention. I got, each of the barns were assigned to someone in charge. In other words, you are responsible that the orders are carried out. I took him to the side and I says, "Look, the people got here thread, they got here this. I and are willing to go ahead and go out by night. We'll get to the farmers and maybe we'll be able to bring some food." So, this here, you know, that's how you bartered sort of. They give you this and you barter to bring maybe some old bread, old potatoes, or whatever it is. And it was risky again. They say, you risked your life. Of course. You

could be killed. Of course. You knew that death is looming every move you make. No hiding. But it took determination, like I had, to lead on. Let's go. And on a few occasions, three times we did it. The third time was a longer time until we came back to base and that head of ours, the supervisor, says no more. He says, "I couldn't sleep. I was worried stiff. Maybe they catch up with you and if they catch up with you, they'll come and they'll murder us all." He says, "Harold, that's it. You're not going anymore." Fine. Lucky for us, about two nights after that, the partisans came and they broke camp. And, of course, the Germans and the police ran away. They came dressed with white sheets like the Ku Klux Clans were; I didn't know it then, but I know it now. They wore robes, not with the thing on the top, but the bottom. Because the moon was shining at night and with a white sheet over, you cannot see objects and that was their camouflage. They had machine guns with them. The first time I saw like soldiers dressed in uniform, like it was from the Red Army, the way they left us. What is that? They told us we are partisans; we don't want that road to be built. You have two choices, either to be killed by the Germans or we'll kill you. We don't want that road to go through the forest and you are going to choose whichever way. Tomorrow you have a choice to break out. They're going to kill our families behind. We have told you. There was no compromise. I ran over and started talking. "I would like to join you." No, you can't join me now. I says, "Then what good is all your talk?" Okay. We decided, the mean the head of barn and all of it, next morning that we are not going anyplace. We are waiting here. That the Germans, mind you, how bad it was that we have to cooperate with the enemy instead of working against. The first thing everybody said, we'll wait over. If no police or commands had shown up, we'll decide what to do. After nobody the whole day came, all of a sudden, understand, you were afraid even to move about or to know what to do. So trained were we as it would be like robots. No one dared to say, hey, I am with you. And why? This is what I mean when I said the dehumanization program. That's how successful the Germans were, to instill that fear. That was the cooperation they got from us because of that fear. That looks like everybody knew he was going to die, or going to be killed. But it was sort of a own personal desire, maybe not today and maybe not tomorrow, you know. So you did not, you know, if you went the other way around, so you were dead; that's all. No big deal. Then when the partisans, like I say, so the next day they didn't come. The next day everyone went on their own and in small groups through the forest. We did not have a compass either. But we knew more or less the direction and the hope of the group that I was with were all from the Rachen. We said, hope, let us find partisans. We did not want to come back to that ghetto, but where do you go. You cannot start a partisan on your own; you have no weapons, you have nothing. I say at that time, we made groups of about 20, no more. Because, again, of self-preservation. If the police catch you, it will be 50, they'll kill 50. So, they would better kill 20 or whatever it is. And everything had to be thoughtful and organized. While on the way walking, when we came to parts where there were farmers, in the morning we saw the smoke coming out of the chimneys, you heard the noises from the livestock and so on, they would go in back some of the farmers responded favorably. They'd say, "Well, we just got through breakfast." You know what I mean and they would give us, otherwise would give us a bigger part of bread, you know, to take along or whatever they could. Other ones would lock the door. "You better get out

of here before I'm going to kill you. The Germans find out that I helped you, they'll kill us." Other ones were overwhelmed with fear and didn't want to help us. And you couldn't afford to fight, you know. The fact remains on three days it took us marching like that until we came to the ghetto. We didn't meet a partisan. Nowhere, as we marched. We didn't realize where the partisans, sure by night you would have probably run into partisans. By night we stood in the forest and slept. After working all day, if somebody would get up near you, you probably couldn't hear it either. You know what I mean. You were weak enough already. We made it to the ghetto, looks like the ghetto knew about it, the Univad, and there was sort of no punishment on us or anything like that. On the second day, a guy comes over to me. And I came back. I started to organize a group, guys that I knew from the ghetto, and I had 22 guys that are willing to escape with me to the forest. And I have gave them an order, already was in my mind a commander. I said, "Tonight, everybody says goodbye to their families. Not tomorrow, not maybe, but tonight." That included myself; I came home, got my people together. Not from my brothers and sister and uncle, because my grandpa was no longer alive. When I came back from that, my uncle told me that grandpa died. I still don't believe he died. What I mean is, I think he committed suicide, where he didn't want to tell me that. I went over and called him to the side and I said, "I'm deciding to leave, after I told you what had gone on with the partisans, maybe I'll get to join them." I said, "I cannot take my brother with. You need him here to help you." It was punishing me many years of my life of how I left my brother behind. I had no way out, taking him. This way I hoped he'll help the others. Then I said goodbye to him, to my uncle, which I wasn't ready yet. He had still an American \$20 bill because they used to send it to my grandpa, money to him from the United States. He sewed it in my pants in case I'll have money for something. Then I came to the family of my father, my aunts, and uncle and I tell them. They all roused up. "Look, what would your father say? What would your mother say? What would this one say? Because of you, the Germans will kill us." And I was strong enough in my mind. I said, "No. You want me to die with you. Because of me, the Germans will not kill you. But that's what you wish. You might think that it's going to be better for you, that I'll die with you, but I have decided that if I die, I'll die alone. But I will fight not to die." And therefore, it started the fights and I left the house. And where did I come? I came into the synagogue. In the synagogue, people were living there, too; it was no more synagogue services. People were living on the floors and my uncle came after me, which it was, he was actually a first cousin to my father and he was married to my father's sister. That same uncle used that hiding place which I had built for myself and during the massacre, he and his younger son came to the forest and with cries and hugs, he says, "I wish we'd all listened to you." To make a long story short, after that it happened. I did not want to go back to the house there to be with them. I ran away to go to my next in command. He was with two sisters and a mother; no father. No sooner did I open up the door, his mother jumps on me, grabs me, "Tomorrow I'm turning you in to the Gestapo." I says, "What's wrong with you? I just came to tell Capel (ph) was his name, I just came to tell Capel that I resigned from the whole thing; we're not going." "Oh, that's good." And I left. Since nothing came out, a couple of days later when we were going to the line up of the Univad, a man walks over to me. His name was Schumel Bilinsein (ph). He

survived; he's in Israel right now. Through him I got the book about Dr. Atlas. It was published for him. He wrote it in Polish and it was translated into Hebrew. But it looks like there was no one to translate it into English. You know, it's a lot involved and it's one chapter, you know. If I ever could do it, get the rights if my book was published, I would probably incorporate it, but I still so far have doubts about it. He says, "Harold, I want to speak to you. I understand you are organizing a group to escape to the forest." I was shivering just from the sound of what he was talking to me. I said, "You must be mixing me up with somebody else. You are crazy." He hugged me; he says, "Please, Harold. I know what I'm talking about. I talk to you because I want to join you. I can help you. I've got with me a girl who was a nurse and she had helped amputate the part of the arm from a captain who is in the forest that we know. So if you take us, we'll be of help to you. I have one more guy who is from another ghetto, an escapee who wants to join us." "Well," I said, "no." I did not want to admit, but evaluating the facts of the nurse and so on, I said, "I'll tell you. I've reached a decision. Tomorrow at 6 o'clock, whoever shows at the fence as soon as night falls, we are going to escape. Do you guys have weapons?" He says no. "I have a bayonet outside of the ghetto near that little river." I says, "I know where it is. At least we'll have one weapon." The next thing, I did not want to talk about it anymore; I was too much in pain. I wouldn't go back home for that night, for that time that we came home from work. The next day, I told my brother; I went over to him, the younger one. That was my way of saying goodbye to him. I says, "Take my car coat to the tailor." We knew a tailor who also survived later in the massacre; Nvetsky (ph) was his name. "Take it to him and he'll have to sew on something for me." Really, that was just an excuse for me to sort of see him for the last time, which it was. He did. He took my car coat there. I didn't go inside but my youngest sister or brother, I couldn't face them anymore. As soon as he left the coat, I saw him from a distance; I saw the guys scatter because there's one thing I told him, when you come, do not come as a group. You must come distantly seeing each other, not as a group. And they listened. As soon as I saw him, I ran in and I took the, no, I took the coat from him before he had gone into the house, from the tailor. I says, "I must go someplace right now." And I ran away.

End of Tape #4

Tape #5

A: We would know that no matter how much there is, when singled out, it never was in any catastrophe, or in any event what it happens. If everybody could think positive, obviously, Hitler would never be able to succeed. But because he could divide and conquer . . . (empty space in the tape) . . . to give all the time, about the fights. And mind you, that town of the Rachen, as partisans we occupied later. We held it for three weeks. But, this little group of mine that we come to the forest, could not convince the commander to attack it before. Later, after the massacre we attacked. Okay, I know where I stopped right now.

Q: Oh, you do?

A: Yeah.

Q: Good.

A: As I aforementioned, to relocate my story right now, my rest of the guys, two men and one young lady, were getting to the point where we are to meet. I met with them and I said, "Now, it's a little bit too light yet. I did not want anyone to see that we are going to have to dig our way out underneath the wires. So we must wait until dusk comes, a little bit darker." And I know people were not on the outside in those days, in other words. But still and though for the if and I wanted to dig out my bayonet from underneath there for that. So I waited until it turned a little bit darker and we started with our bare hands. We did not have no shovel; with our bare hands to dig a path underneath because it was in the ground, that's on the other end, and it was the time of year when it wasn't frozen. And we made a dig over there so that we were able to lift up the wire and one by one, we slid on the other side, pushed back the sand to demarcation, so it should not be a mark seen that someone was doing that. And, we immediately went to the place where I said I had put my bayonet in there. And I had a part of a piece of grass over there that I knew once I pulled it out, I wouldn't have to dig because I wanted to be on the ready with it. I got my bayonet, put on my car "and everybody held whatever they had with them. That's all we had, was coats. We didn't have anything else. And we started on our way. I knew my directions and I therefore, at this time I'm explaining it to them. I says, "Look straight ahead and you'll see from a distance the lights. That's where the hospital is. We cannot go this way straight because we may run up on police or Germans. So, what we will have to do is go out of way until we cross the main road leading from Zulva (ph) to the Rachen to Slonya (ph). That was the main artery road. Once we crossed the road, we have to go to the other position. So, I explained to them that that's going to be, and I explain to them that that's going to be, and I tell them, "We are not going to go like a column, but we're going to be spread out." So, the four of us, in case someone sees, you know, should not be able with one shoot to do it. So, we will keep distance, distant enough. We will not talk loud at all. If you have to say something to somebody, come over, make a marker to stop and we'll talk because we definitely do not want anyone to hear. The language that

we will talk will be Russian and, in part, we will talk Polish. So, that if somebody should hear us, should hear any of the two languages; but definitely, by all needs, no Yiddish. To camouflage our whereabouts and who we are. We came, as I showed it to the road and we started to check and in the same spread out wing, we ran through the road. It was not a big road. We ran through the road, away from the road, inland, which it was like shrubs and so on. And we turned, as I say, and I knew exactly the locations where it was going on by this particular time. We had to turn a little bit forward ahead because we were getting to be closer to the place where in that forest, that little forest area, they were making a big dig which I said. And be that it is at night, I still was afraid who knows whether police or Germans, you know what I mean, may not be in the vicinity on the other side. So, everything was thought out by me and I outlined, I explained it to them, that's what it's going to be. And after that, we have to cross another artery road which was leading into the Rachen and then with the fields alongside that other road, we would walk until it becomes forest. Forested area, from that point of view that we were from the city of the Rachen would be about maybe 10 kilometers, here you're talking about five miles; that forest would start. So it was a smaller forest area, where they used to have hay, you know, to cut hay. And at certain times of the year, there used to be water, you know; it was not that you could sink in, but it used to be the water. That's why they used to, some of them, have to store their hay on elevated things for the farmers so in the winter they could come back with sleds and get the hay for the feeding of their cattle and so on. We did achieve that and I explained it to them: by good working through the night, we should achieve a target which it was called at that time, there was maleojaky (ph) and bulchenavitz (ph), the small lakes was called one settlement and the bigger lakes was the other settlement. I knew that I had some Gentiles, farmers, over there that I dealt with, with the hope that may be they could help us out. I also did not mention over here that in the winter, I was working with a fishermen's crew while in the ghetto and this crew purposely was sent to bring fresh fish for the Germans. So, while we were working on the ice over there and wherever we were sleeping, they were given barns to sleep in, so I knew again. So I tell them, I says, "Tonight, this was going to be for me to know that I'm on target. I'll have to hear that much. And, we'll have to go out to the road to see because there's signs, certain signs on the road. So we planned in the little forest away from it, over there we will have to spend the day. And that's what we were planning to be our march, which we were talking about give or take at that night to make no more than about 10 to 12 miles. Because, remember, we cannot march. We did not have our dinners and suppers and breakfasts before going, so we sort of gone, it was sort of carrying us, the will was doing it, not that physically we were built to be able to do it. And as prescribed, we came to the same, I said the small pond. There were more than one pond, so let's call it pond instead of, you know, water ponds. And now by that particular time that we got that far, we were already seeing that daylight was coming. And with daylight coming, we were fearful; we were fearful of anything. We were fearful for the forest, we were fearful for the road. So we decided to break and go into the forest, find a bushy place and one would stay awake while the other three would be asleep and we would sort of maneuver around. So it was all planned out well and that's how it was done. They realized in the morning, now, you will see the shepherds because the area used to bring

out the cattle for the grass feeding and so on. And at night, evening time, they were taken back. So since we didn't eat all night and the walking, so we decided to send Heinka, was the girl's name, Heinka, that I said she was a nurse. Somehow or other, a female could camouflage their way more as a farm girl or farmhand than we, as men. And she was speaking good Polish or good Russian so we decided to send her out, to the closest chimney, so out to the edge of the forest and you could see the smoke coming through the chimney, so that means, they were over there. So, we picked a singled out farmer, away from all the rest, and she went in there. She said to them that she is looking for work and she mentioned settlements quite in the area where we were, going to hit; in other words, that she comes from Warla. Warla was the name of, I don't know how to translate Warla, the meaning of it in English. But, you know, when a chicken, where the food comes in over there on the little part, that's a Warla, for instance. You know what I'm saying. So, that's the pocket over there. So, that was a name, also there was a Big Warla and the Small Warla. So, she was saying that she comes from that. And why Warla? That was poor farming over there. There was nothing but sands so the fields were so bare they could only grow red potatoes. And the people from the settlements used to come to the forest to work to earn a living, or there was a place where they used to make turpentine and the other one. So all of them used to, that was their means of making a living. So she pretended, because often people from that would be looking for farm work. And she came in to that woman, and told her that she was looking for work, and if they could use her. And they told her, no, they can't. She says, "Do you mind sharing some food with me? I don't have any." And the woman asked her to sit down and eat but she did not want to. She says, "Give me some food." And she brought, you know what I mean a piece of bread and everything like that. Now, all four of us were sharing it and we decided to sort of sleep awake, awake and sleep; you know what I'm saying? So we heard the shepherds coming nearby with their cattle and shepherds usually baked potatoes; that's the old time trick which shepherds would do. They'd make them in the fire. So we hoped that some potatoes is going to be left, which, again, if they cannot eat it, they're not taking them with. You cannot re-bake it. So, the same day after the shepherds left, we immediately went to follow these places to see and dig in and sure enough, we did find a few potatoes that were left over. So there again, we had our food source for the day and that's what it was. And we decided to march again. So, to give you the perimeter, we would manage to be, assuming in our language, about two to five hundred yards away from the road. Therefore, you saw the telephone poles as it was. So he could go by that perimeter because once you got into the forest, you forget where north and south and east and west is, you know what I mean? So, this sort of gave me like a compass-way, being in danger, when we heard any movement, either trucks or stuff like this here, we immediately retreated deeper into the forest and stay on guard, which it happened through the course of the night, that you would see some traffic going through. And our hope was, maybe we'd encounter partisans so we can surrender to them and beg them for help. To make it a little bit shorter was, it took us three weeks until I finally stumbled on to one farmer -- and here I want to explain something as a note, footnote. After two weeks almost walking around and not achieving anything, that same Soneg Bornstein (ph), he used to be in large, before the war, a columnist writer to a Jewish/Polish paper, in large, that guy. He

says, "Harold." He says, "I think we are losing track. Look at it. It's two weeks. We haven't seen or heard one partisan." So, I said to him, we used to call him Sonic (ph), at that time, like in Polish. I says, "Sonic, so what do you want me to do?" He says, "Why don't we take and make a vote whether we go forward or whether we go back." I says, "You know, we were four of us. If all three of you want to go back, you are welcome. I am not going back. If I have to be killed, I'll be killed here. I'll go to achieve my goal, what I set forth to you." So, they looked sort of at each other and says, "Well, we'll go with you." I says, "Let it be clear; I will not stop. I will not go back. I feel as bad as it is." Until finally, one, a few, I mean because right away that it happened; it happened quite a few days afterwards. And I'm already by distance into the bigger forest area. And over there, they had more like colonists, you know, one farm, maybe two, three farms; you know what I mean? But not a settlement anymore. And the settlement, the last one, was Slechy Podraberska (ph); again it's a name that's on the map, mapped out. And in front of that settlement was the river Shars (ph). And on that river used to be, before the hostilities, it used to be a prom (ph) as we used to call it. A prom is like a passage way, you know, that they lead it, that it's built like on barrels like this here. So they come and they cross the cattle or trucks or whatever it is. And at that time, later on, the partisans destroyed it by the way, because we did not want to make it easy on the Germans to be able, if they go to the police, to go through. We destroyed it and the Germans started to build a bridge that they wanted and after they built the bridge, we needed it too, so we let the bridge be there. But that prom as we would call it, that passage way, we didn't like the idea. Not we, I mean, the partisans in general, the command decided that they were going to destroy it. So we come there and from distance I remember the house because I used to deal with them often. The father was with one leg, and he was, and so I remember. And his son was a blonde guy. I recognized that I knew him. As I come near, that dog is beginning to bark. And the dog was on a chain, running around the farm. That dog just was tearing my heart out, he wouldn't stop. Before long, they're in back of me and I'm at the edge of the forest. All of a sudden, I see a guy coming out without his shirt on, in pants, and I take a look. He has tatoos on his hands. With tatoos on his hands, it leaves me to believe immediately that he is Russian because local people did not have tatoos on their hand. It wasn't, but the Russians, quite a number of them, especially a lot of them who used to serve in the Army or Navy for so many years and part of makeup, you find it a lot. As I take a look and come closer, I see a gun. It is in his pocket, hanging out. I hope that you will believe me that when I tell you is exactly the way it happened. I froze. He pulled out the gun and he told me to stop, halt. I halted. And I say to him, I mentioned the farmer's name. I say, "I want to see him." And the son, after all of this here, seeing that the -- the guy's name is Misha Dubakof (ph). He's a Soviet as I expected. I came out and I recognized him, calling him by name. He said right now to the Soviet guy, or I will call him to the easterners, is an easterner. He says, "Put, Misha," he says, "put your gun in your pocket. That's a friend. I know who he is. Let me go ahead and talk with him." So I un-froze, sort of and I start going and I come in to him. I shook hands with Misha first, and then with him. And he starts asking me, "What are you going here?" I says, "I'm looking to join the partisans." I tell him the story already about it. He says, "Tell them they are safe. Let them come in here." I start, they saw me and what had happened, they

immediately run away further. Now I have a hard time with my yelling and talking, bringing them back to me. And I keep talking to them in Yiddish, basically to understand that if I talk Yiddish, I'm safe. And I tell them, "We are all right. Please come out here, all of you." And they finally come out and we all go into the house. I get that man from the house and I hug him and tell him, you know what I mean? By that time, he asks me about my brother and this and that and the other. I says, "I cannot tell you anything." I says, "You know, I just escaped from the ghetto. It's been three weeks that I've been away from there. I don't know. Have you heard anything?" He says, "No, nothing special had happened. You usual." Because this gentle people used to keep, were the ones who would keep tabs on the partisans in the same way, and they knew what had happened in the city. So, at this particular time, he introduces me back to Misha Dubakof (ph), as he's the partisan. I says, "I have one favor from you." I did not mention it at first. On my car coat, I removed the star I used to wear. At one time we were wearing round things, yellow, and at one time we were wearing the star. I did not remove that from the bottom, but I removed it from the top that it shouldn't be seen. Be for what it's worth, . I says, "Misha, do me a favor and have the honors. I want you to cut this identity of mine. You know, as I use the word the shameful thing of recognition. And I says, "From now on, I won't need it anymore." I says, "I hope I can become a partisan." We are served to eat right now and for the first time we are seeing food? And the farmer keeps talking to us, "You can eat. Eat." I says, "We've not had food in months and months so much, so we'll just eat a little bit." And we thanked them, we did not know, crying, all of us, how to thank these people for what they did to us and he explained to us that a commander in charge of the local partisans will be here maybe in a few, not tonight, but maybe in a few days. And Misha Dubakof (ph) therefore, is taking charge of us and he is going to go ahead and keep us comfort and covered until the, the name of the commander was Zotsof (ph). Zotsof is rabbit, from a, like Mr. Rabbit; you know what I mean? Zitz (ph). Zitzaf (ph) was like a tartar, if you know what I'm saying about a tartar. You know, there is a nationality in Russian, the Tartars. They are all short people and their skin is like with little holes and so on, not a smooth skin but like this here. This man was a lieutenant in the Army. He was left; he did not want to go to the prison of war camps. And now I must tell you how the partisans got started with. Like Misha Dubokof (ph), like Zitsof, many decided that they did not want to fall into the hands of the Germans and they remained in the forest with the retreating armies. What they used to do, find farmers who needed help. If maybe the son was drafted or killed or whatever it is. So, they would cork for their keep, only for room and board. By day, they would help him and if the Germans would come, or the police would come to the area, they would be signaled by one another. They kept on a tab and they would escape to the forest to hide themselves. This is the way that the partisans really had started. With the local people who had to run away because they were working with the former Communist government, and they knew that they must stay away, otherwise they would all be killed. So in certain areas, some of local area turned in those people, to make good with the Germans; you follow me? So, between the local left overs that were involved and between the retreating armies, those who didn't want to become prisoners of war, this is where they choose that life. And later on, the Germans got hold of it because the Volasof's (ph) Army already was surrendering and they had all a new

Army of Ukrainians who used to work for the Germans now and fill-in for whatever they need, in local or on the front line. So the Germans permitted all the farmers who do need help, if they see a prisoner of war, because that's how they were able to get hold of the prisoners that were in hiding, that all they have to do is register them. Once they're registered them, they can keep them as working. A lot of them did register and then they went on the Germans side, joined the police force or anything like that. Others were really killed; you know what I mean, by the Germans or sending them back to the camps. But, I'm talking about those who succeeded in their mission to stay out, becoming POWs or working with the farmers and that's how the partisans started. At that particular time, the partisans, I want to tell how the rest of it a little bit later, but I want to tell about us. We had to wait a couple of nights until Zitsof (ph), as I'll use the name, Zitsof, which he was the commander. And like I say, he still had the ammunition, leather jacket, and everything that he was wearing at the time when they retreated. And he was a very nervous kind of guy, heavy smoker and drinker, just as much. But he was a skillful shooter. He could go ahead and 1, 2, 3, you know what I mean, and aim target and have it there. And I had the pleasure of meeting him at that time and all of us, so he came in and one by one, we went for interviews with Zitsof. And I told him that I was sort of the leader of the group. I helped them out, told him about myself. He says, "Tell me, what you're doing is good. But, what do you think we have warehouses here with weapons? I know you want to join. We'll take you in. Where are we going to get weapons for you?" I says, "Where do you get weapons for the others? Tell me and I'll get them." "Well, you've got to go kill a policeman or German." I says, "We are already. Whenever you go to, that you are going to do these kind of ways, to set up an ambush, we volunteer." He says, "Okay." He okayed us, all four and we had a good few drinks with him together to prove it, our loyalty and everything like that. And the day afterwards, we were taken to a semi-camp. What was the camp? A wooded area deep over there with big palm trees. We used to spread out, you know what I mean, something underneath what they used to cover the horses with and that was your bed. You did not have no pillows. Your rifle was between your legs and that's how you were, you know, until you were, they used to have an Army, sort of, kitchen set up with a fork of the trees made, and buckets and that used to cook whatever we could get, you know what I mean? Because we would have to go to farmers and wait for and ask, but this time we used to go with weapons and ask for food and we would get it. So, we had the first taste that we joined. The second news was that we were going to have a ambush in the next few days and all of us would go. I was elected to climb up on the tree and be the observer. So I was given field glasses. All the other ones, there was a group altogether of about ten partisans and they heard the news that Germans and the police and Fritz, which I had mentioned his name before, who was the head of the Gestapo at this time. On this particular ambush, we, all right, Fritz remain wounded but he, they took him back, you know what I mean to the Rachen, but this is to the Rachen ghetto at that particular time aware of partisans that was over there, but it didn't do much good. There was no organization. So we went on that ambush and succeeded. And I ran to get, the first thing I got was a pistol and I got a gun from somebody else, I mean a rifle from somebody else. And before long, as you know, all of us had weapons. So, at least, but my job on the top of that tree was to signal to somebody

at the bottom of how far and how many. The policemen were riding on bicycles and Fritz was at that time on a carriage driving; that's how he used to drive. You know, he had, sitting like a king. You know what I mean, driving. And there was a contingent of maybe 10 or 12, you know, call it, you know, that they wore over there. And what do you think they used to do, come to the forests either to go ahead, take certain things that they wanted, food for themselves, you know, like ham and the other things. The farmers always had it. Or if not, they went to go to come to the farmers to have a good time. That's where they used to come in the junkets like this here. We attacked. They started to retreat, but one of them got killed right away. The other one injured, which we killed him anyways. And Fritz escaped. So this was my first participation as a partisan and I felt myself right now ten feet tall. Here I got a pistol, got a rifle. Later the pistol I gave away to Zotsof. He didn't want it. They didn't let you have a pistol right away. So I had a rifle and I was full of joy, full of hope that now I'm doing something worthwhile. Now the story of the fights and the partisans is a big story to tell which it would take. I wish you would tell me how much further you want me to detail on it, or to go a little bit more. So, you tell me.

Q: Okay. Let's change the tape.

End of Tape #5

Tape #6

Q: Had you ever had any experience using weapons, or using a gun before?

A: Until I reached the forest, I never experienced using a weapon in my life. And after the ambush, when I got that rifle, I asked later to be instructed of the usage of the rifle, and which I was shown how to clean it and how to use it. And I still remember vividly the first time when I fired the first shot, which it was in the air. But, holding the rifle the way I was instructed to hold, it gave me a bounce that I fell on the ground. And the instructor at that time told me, "That's all right. Don't get scared about it." But, you will learn that you, I held it too strong to my body instead of a little bit aiming it and having the touch and feel. So, that was really my first experience that day, in my life, where I went away to use a weapon.

Q: Was there any personal conflict with the concept of using a gun and killing someone?

A: In what way do you mean?

Q: Well, I'm sure you weren't brought up to shoot?

A: Okay. The concept at home before the war was that killing was not a Jewish way. The Jewish people did not hold guns, you know what I mean, like this here, like, in other words like joining, like a lot of people join the rifle club or anything like that. In the Hasidic way of life, you could never encounter that. I believed the news breaking about a Hasidic person holding a gun, that change came in Israel and it only came after World War II. It only came after the Holocaust when finally, the people who cherished a religion became understanding that you must learn the art of weaponry. Because basically, historic the Jews were warriors. They had warriors or they could never have Samson, they can never have King David and they can never could have all the era of history. But, the Diaspora (ph) was a different element what Jews lived in and weaponry was not the form for them to be. They were afraid, they were guests in a country and they felt like it, that therefore they should not antagonize by it because the only kind known to me when Jews were practicing weaponry was in Europe, in Poland before the war, who belonged to Batar (ph). But my family had no dealings with Batar. My upbringing, I am a Batar person these days but I only switched, I only changed after the war. But in those years, I was not. So therefore on the Jewish scene, with the exception, not 100 percent, with the exception, weaponry or rifle clubs was not a Jewish life. And it was not part of the Jewish way of life.

Q: So, it was very clear to you at this time that this was the way you were going to proceed?

A: Right. And this is why the change in my life came later, just because of that perhaps, I say that. And that's where the change came.

Q: After this ambush, what happened. Why don't you continue?

A: Well, after the ambush, now, we were in that camp, trying to join the rest and just to bring to understanding an average day of life in the underground, what did it start? The underground was living in at that era of time, in bushy parts of the forest. They used to see separately a company; in other words, you couldn't come into an area and you found a thousand partisans. Perhaps to find a thousand partisans, which they were in the local, was probably in ten different spaces. So we used to be living like in companies. A company could consist of a maximum of 100, maybe not so close. And then it had so many platoons. At times used to have two platoons, at times we used to have three platoons, depending on the way it was. And, I must mention here the commander's name; whatever his private name was, was the name of the company; like for instance, Zitsof (ph), which I joined with, the name of that company was Zitsof. There was also Blatoz (ph), there was Fadyakomorov (ph), there were Lanskytrak (ph); there were a variety of more. And all of that goes, didn't change until about 1943 when we used to be when we started getting para troopers who used to be dropped at a bigger force of Naliboky (ph) and then they used to make day away to our forests. When the partisans were organized under the direct command of Moscow.

Q: What was your forest's name?

A: Leipachani (ph) forest is where I am dwelling at this time in the area that we were. And I geographical area would be between one river named Chara (ph) and another river named Yemen (ph) and Yemen was the big river. And literally located, it was between the vicinity of Slomun (ph), between the vicinity of Novogrudate (ph), and Lida (ph) and that was the perimeter in which we were located, which on the map it would be found. Now, this is the way we started; as time went on, it diversified, it became bigger. When the Germans would attack us, at times when we became too powerful, we again would have to breakup in smaller groups, operating in various areas. The brigade used to assign areas of where which way we were. Now, the other part, how did they achieve all of that? They used to have like a parole or consult. Every time, every night, or rather, every day for 24 hours, he used to be a parole name, maybe tonight, today, the next, Moscow. So, the partisans would meet with partisans. The base at Moscow, we knew that they were also partisans because we operated at night and you couldn't, a lot of times see.

Q: Who gave you that?

A: Well, the staff which it was the general staff and the local area staff used to decide on all of these here things. At first, when we were groups by itself, like Zitzof (ph) groups and the other, I remember we used to do it by whistles. And I would, we used to do three whistles as a response, two whistles as a question, you know. So it went on from time to time more modern it came when we were more organized, when the content was. When each company used to have a radio man, the whole tune and everything else changed. But that didn't take place until about mid 1943 when we were equipped with our radio man

and immediately we could have the direct contact with the staff, let's say, from the brigade or the brigade could get immediately in touch with Moscow. For instance, at one time through 1943, when the front lines began turning the other way, that the Germans were starting on the retreat. Stalin gave an order and he talk about the partisans, but the greatest help to the war was through the partisans because we kept the Germans busy. The more Germans we kept detained in garrisons towards the forest, the more we kept for them towards the cities because they couldn't depend on the local themselves. The last man power, they were able to send to the front lines. The more mines we used to explode to stop, even if it meant stopping the trains, going in a certain direction to the front lines for one day, one day's supplies means a big deal to the front lines. So it came up on order at one time which it was coded "rail". That was the code name, "rail". On this night there was a direct order from Stalin that under all circumstances, wherever this is a partisan between the Soviet Union to the farthest line of the front or behind. On this night, every partisan must contribute to destroy as part of the rail. In many areas we were sending in small groups to make the damage bigger and in other areas, it was an order that we had to fight our way because the Germans began already to watch the railroads. Which again, and in the meanwhile, we gave them additional people to use for watching the railroads. So they started instilling a system which it was like electrical wire but it was not the wire electrically, it was like through bells. Then we would come to the railroad, we would stumble on something and that would sound off a sound. So at times we would not even know. At another times, they would go ahead and put mines alongside for the infantry mines so once we would come to the railroad, therefore we could be killed or that would send off a signal and save a mine from coming. They had to include the locomotives to detect. So we involved in one way or the other much grief and problems for the Germans through that. So Stalin gave therefore that order that the rails on this night and on that night, that's why it was. We, through power of attack, which were otherwise, everyone of us was given a piece, it looked like a white piece, they used to call it in Russian, "towel (ph)", that's the plastic explosives as we call them of today. It was an oblong piece like a piece; it had one piece like to put in the capsule and these capsules were various. They were capsules where you could go ahead to detonate them, it would draw a line from a distance so much away and as you pulled it, it triggered it off and you would explode it. Other times we used more; we used to make this together in bigger amounts and put them out underneath there and wait. We used to do it in places where it curves, on a big curve. And on a big curve, everybody knows the train slows down. So before it goes into the curve, once past the locomotive, we always wanted to hit the locomotive when we used to make an explosion because if the locomotive explodes, no matter how much damage you didn't do to the rest, but this here causes so many trains passing that to de-rail. So it was all strategy involved. They used to sometimes put in a wire into the ring and that wire we used to put right near the rail so as the locomotive would travel, it would trigger either by weight or it would trigger to touch, this here part of the wire, and the explosion would occur. We used to retreat to quite a distance, so, but the distance far enough that we would hear it, sometimes. On other occasions, it happened, your mine did not explode because it was a faulty capsule. We did not have the equipment all the time. So before we had this fancy explosives, because when we were in touch with Moscow, they dropped

by air all of this kind of things in the forest and it used to be distributed to the other partisan organizations. Before that, what we used to do, so many, as I aforementioned, the soldiers who knew ammunition and every company has at least a few guys who knew ammunition. They used to take, for instance, the shells from the artillery shells. The artillery shells basically melt them out into a box or square or whatever it is and we would now how much explosives, put in just one of these here capsules to this place, wire it, and you take this here and that served as an explosive. At times, while the capsule was there, in the artillery shell, we would mend it to be able to form, to make a capsule. There were specialists. I, only have seen it, worked with it, I couldn't tell you, I can only tell you of one incident that one time that we were on the rail and we were on a very special mission, as Poles, sort of, going and on the way when we reached our mission and we turned back to go way, as partisans, and we had to demolish a few bridges and lines. And at one place near the railroad, I was wearing a long coat and all of us had enough to drink before. And I remember seeing that wire almost, if that wire had been a little bit more touching it, we all would have gone to hell. But again, drinking was a part of the insecurity that one lived. So, in the partisans, it used to be a slogan, vethum (ph) "let's have a drink". Swabota (ph). Now there is glory, today there is victory, so we got to take a drink. Then we had another way that we were sad because we had, we suffered losses, we were ambushed or whatever it is. So, of course you have to, so one way or the other. Moonshine, we did not have regular vodka, moonshine was part of the diet that I would say 99 percent of the partisans used to be involved. And you couldn't help it, you lived at a time that the next minute, you could be dead. You were not responsible for yourself, so that was part of the irresponsible that it was going on. However, I think the Russian Army still is involved in a lot of drinking. I don't say that the American Army isn't, but I'm sure it's more visible as the way the Russians were.

Q: You're talking about drinking and getting drunk, or drinking?

A: That's the true answer, both ways. One time, you drink for everything, celebrating, and you drink so much that you got drunk. On the other hand, you came into a place that you became drunk by not being able to handle that, you know what I'm saying? .

Q: Did the drinking help seal the comraderie between the Jewish and the Soviet soldiers?

A: Well, the comraderie or vice versa was no contribution to the drinking. It was basically, we must understand that these people had lived in a poisonous area before they came to the forest. The poison that Germany or the anyway Nazis did through all kinds of propaganda, somehow or the other penetrated to them. And a lot of time, it was a cause why so many joined to become anti-Semites was not directly but it was just, became a part at first like in a joking way. For instance, I remember when we got the paratroopers to us and at one time jokes started to penetrate and go around about Jews. And the first time I ever heard the expression with the long "r" instead of abram (ph), you know, the different way. Because a lot of Jewish people pronounced it that way. And like one of the jokes, for instance, we were telling was, if fight, let us fight, but send me on the last

wagon. This is only to tell you that they existed and though existed in a more way than that. And the biggest problem was, when we knew that this were, that the paratroopers came and trained in Moscow. This is why it would irritate one to realize that the poison was not planted down here, but the poison was already planted in Moscow or other there. We did not know at the time of the atrocities that Stalin did and the killing of Jewish people, that it went on at that time. We didn't, this type of communications we didn't. But we did know that many in the rank, of high rank, Captain Lavida (ph), for instance, in our area, in our forest, and he had, he's, the man was sent down for one thing, political. He started printing a paper and that paper was distributed in the local area and so was it distributed to the partisans at the same time. As I mentioned, the politicalization of the Russians began to come back to us in the year of 1943. And we had to listen to a little bit more coaching and teaching. While we were at war, and we were not there, but we still, they had to bring us in. So all these changes, changing of the name, changing in command, different things, while some of them were positive, there was a lot of negative. And at that particular time, one could not go ahead sort of, in a way, feel out as we were so mistreated by the outside world and so many anti-Semites were around, that it was sort of small wonder, that somebody else is joining the same. As it looked like, the whole world was against us. And that's the feeling that we all had. So, it used to be at times, when we were done, meaning the partisans in general, the Jews would not be all to themselves because basically, when they came to the forest, a lot of the Jews came in a group. For instance, in our area, we had Dr. Atlas. In our area we also had the Alonzos (ph) which comes from my wife's area, you know, from Jetel (ph) or Jachoviz (ph), whichever way you want to call it. There were groups, 100 percent Jews that they escaped the ghetto and the massacre and they came then. So the commander, for instance, like Dr. Atlas was there. And he was the one who was practicing doctor, but the man went to battle. And he gave his life in battle. But his group was called the Dr. Atlas group. Later after he passes on, this group changes its name and we get an escapee from the POWs by the name of Sherbin (ph). Sherbin was a very beautiful commander, at that time when he took it over. But, after he took it over, they did not let it be anymore the whole 100 percent Jewish, they incorporated other partisans. So the change went on like integration. Yes and no. When the times were good, they didn't want to separate Jewish groups. When the times were bad, so even the Abramofs (ph). You know, it was at one time the commander at that time was Abramof. In Abramof's group, there were 80 percent Jews and 20 percent non-Jews, and the mistreatment was clearly. In other words, what kind of a word was sent home? And, you know, when, in these kind of cases, he was not Jewish, Abramof, you know; or even if he was, he was not telling about it. And anti-Semitism was a clear venture to see in the everyday affair. And I want, for instance, right now to dwell one day life as a partisan. We used to have a wake up time, but now with the Army, somebody was blowing the coronet or whatever it is, but it used to be a wake up time that we had to get up. And then we used to have to get up and there was a briefing time. That took place already where we were under the direction. The company was called to order. The commander was coming out and tell the details for the day, whatever we had, each company has to do. Maybe this one is going for an ambush, the other one is going for provisions, the other one is going someplace else. So, you were

called to order and after that, you had breakfast. Our breakfast was, in that part of the world, you don't have a breakfast like in the USA. The breakfast could have consisted of good meats or something, maybe pasta mixed into it. It was a soup and meat combination, one way or the other. And it was on a, built like a bonfire and in the middle of it a bucket. And, so, if you had at times a Ukrainian being the chef or sort of, the cook, we ate a lot of Ukrainian-style meals. And if we had that it wasn't a Ukrainian, so we had another style. But the same thing that I'm bringing out, after you had your bite, then you had, there was an order everyday, cleaning the weapons. And it was not easy to keep the weapons clean as you would, you know, as if you would be outside of the forest. You had to go ahead at times, your platoon commander would have to go ahead and check whether the weapons were cleaned. Then, you used to sometimes go ahead, you had recruits or whatever it is that just came in. We did not know how to handle mines. I remember taking my platoon at one time to a lake. When you detonate a hand grenade into a lake, there is no sound. So we used to go ahead and teach them how you pull out the button and you hold on with your hands and throw it, because we used to have a German hand grenades; used to be with a handle, the Russians were without a handling. They were like an egg with little schrapnels in it. And we would go ahead. And then we had fish afterwards, because from the explosion of that, the fish come up, surface at the top, you know what I'm saying? So, we couldn't go ahead, for instance, to train a machine gunner how to shoot, you know what I mean? Only by explaining it. Because it would have been, first of all, a waste of bullets which you could not afford to waste and second, it would be a give-away of the location. So, there were a lot of things under consideration. But, yes, the guards; every camp that we set up used to have certain guard posts. And the platoon commander used to have to assign from his platoon who goes where. Then there was choice for the platoon commanders. Everyday was the man of the day; in other words, he was the commander of the day. So, he could have been only a platoon commander but today you were in command. So, actually, if we had to go fighting, you were instructing until the commander, the regular commander, would take over and you would go into battle. So, the assignments were a regular routine, almost like Army life and we had to participate. So, cleaning of the weapons; now, the attitude. A lot of weapons, as we are talking now from between '42 and '43, the retreating armies left a lot weapons behind. Some of the farmers took and hide some of the weapons. We had trained enough Russian soldiers who were able to rebuilt weapons. So, from three rifles, maybe we only rebuilt one because you couldn't, you needed a certain part here and another part there and they would skillfully do it together. We would clean the bullets. We did not have any other means but sand, but we'd sand. They would have to clean and polish so we would have bullets. A lot of it was retrieved from the rivers because while retreating, they put a lot in the rivers instead of leaving it for the Germans. We pulled out of Pancer (ph), Pancer truck, from the river Shar, and my commander at that time, Pechulud (ph) which it was his name. And he and other crew refurbished and rebuilt it from another one; from two of this year or maybe more of them, wound up to make the motor work and everything else. And we used it at one time, on two occasions into battle, when we had to attack. So, the same thing achieved to build up a Howitzer (ph), 122 millimeter, you know, where the sacks of the gun powder comes separately from the

shell. And again, we had to retrieve these here things from what we found. The Germans had the farmers or the local area retrieve all the weapons. At that time, they used to purposely clean it and at times, while their trucks would keep up these weapons, we would ambush and maybe take it from them. It was a life of dog eat dog everyday, about obtaining. In those years I'm talking with polishing the weapons and re-building, did not have command posts. We did not have no orders from Moscow and to get ammunition was the only way to get it from the Germans. So we used to attack a garrison, for instance, we were able to, we attacked it basically to obtain weapons. We knew they were going to come back, but we got so many rifles, so many machine guns, so much of the bullets, and everything like that. So, that's what the attack on the garrison served for. Now, another daily routine which it was, where we used to be sent out in various places, to cut telephone. Military phones, you know, in those years, you couldn't have the walkie-talkies as we know today. So, a telephone had to have telephone wire. And the connection between one outpost to the other with wires. And we literally would have to have groups of guys because to cut telephones, there would be enough to send a group of two, three guys; one at that stay watch and two to do the work, cutting it down. We used to sometimes utilize civilians. We would come into a place, take some civilians, make them be the laborers. So the three guys, they went away and got three more farmers so each one of us could do certain jobs that much faster. Some of the farmers did it out of cooperation with us; some of the farmers did it under the gun; we made them do it. But, this was a regular routine of cutting telephones, at times burning bridges. The bridges leading to the forested area, we always wanted it not to be around, because we did not want to have it easy on the Germans to come in with their Pensar (ph) trucks or to come in with their light tanks, or whatever it is to go to the forest. So at times they would go ahead and lay a pentun (ph) or something and come. But all of this here were efforts that gave us more time either to organize, either to retreat. If we knew that a big Army was coming, it was no use to set up battle against them. But, to send up explosive areas, to do damage, to make them believe that who knows is behind or to have a big armies to go, that's what we achieved to do. And if I was to say to you and tell you, battle by battle, I have that recorded. But, it would take me too much to name you the way it was organized. I can tell you one battle in particular points which it was, which is of trying to tell you because we had girls and boys as well in our fighting. And I'm talking about, not that I'm trying to change the subject; I'm talking about Jewish girls and boys who were not skilled in being shooters or killers, but they had to turn to the savagery of the times because that was the only way for us to survive. One, for instance, that I left behind after I escaped, Rasha Batskin (ph) was her name, and we were, she was in part of what I said to begin with, Dr. Atlas group, and later under Shuben (ph). She was Shuben's girlfriend, for instance; even love went on in the forest and babies were born in the forest, or they were killed, and abortions were going on in the forest. We had a clinic, sort of for a hospital, in hiding. It was very well sealed. The Germans in our area never got to the hospital; now, that's how it was sealed through little walk-ways to go in, in a place were they couldn't come, they couldn't come over it with heavy trucks or anything like this here. So, we were organized at that time knowing that the Germans are trying to come to the area to collect wheat. All the farmers -- do we have enough time to go on? .

Q: We have another minute or so left?

A: Okay. The Germans used to give to the farmers like tax, that they need from them so much wheat, so much butter, so much chickens, so much livestock and so on. Each time, the news would be spread around to the farmers, we would get hold of the news and set up ambushes. So, to give you an example, if we were to set up an ambush on them, and we wouldn't touch them while going to collect it, but after they made their collection, the farmers were to distribute it in this and that place and this place. Then they would re-load it and start taking it to the cities. So beforehand, the farmers used to bring it to the cities. When the partisans became organized, no longer would we permit them to take it to the cities. So, either we would get it from the farmer and give him a receipt, or we would make an ambush and when the halting is organized, kill all the Germans or the police, and then turn around, with all of these horses and buggies and wagons with whatever it is; livestock, if not livestock, it was wheat or oats, turn them around, bring them in the forested areas to the poor farmers because the forested areas, farmers were not well-to-do farmers. But they allowed us to be there and give it to them. It was taken from the rich to give it to the poor, as it said. But in our case it was taking it from the Germans and giving it to them.

End of Tape #6

Tape #7

Q: Also?

A: Well, this is why I made my business to go ahead and write that manuscript some 35 years ago. Believe me, it was the wrong time that I did it, because when I did it with my English of today, it would have been published probably ten times over and would have a movie done because all these fights and going on, you know, you've seen probably partisan movies, maybe like it went on in Yugoslavia with Marshall Tito. He was the chief. .

Q: Okay. Hold on.

A: Due to the fact that the Germans were supposed to collect that contribution from the farmers of wheat, when it came to our command's knowledge, we set up an ambush. We were trying to ambush the Germans at that particular time before. While other ambushes were done after they would have already the collection made, this time we wanted to set them up that they should come and we wanted to really show them that we are a power in this forest. On that road leading to the forest, between the city of the Rachen and another little town in the forest called Rudayaverska (ph), since it was, that area was Lipichani (ph) forest, were three, before you came to that river Shara (ph), there were three little bridges on our perimeter. The little bridges were served from the farmers as drains from the fields of the water to go into the canals. So they were of use to the farmers and that's why they were built, was drainage of the canal. We decided that we were going to use explosives on it and burn them up. So, the first bridge we decided which it was closer to the Rachen, that that bridge we will explode the first. So, since our forest by way of espionage, found out and they had onlookers from the distance seeing what is coming in, so they were no Penser (ph) tanks, there were no Pensers or tanks or anything like that. It was just that they were on horses and wagons and a truck, which it was carrying the police and the Germans. So, we decided at that particular time to let a certain amount, since the police used to always be in the front; the Germans used to not be in the front, but the back. So, the police we let through first to come in there and then we decided to blow the bridge. When the explosion of the bridge was, was one truck got caught in the delay and it blew up because of the gasoline and so on. Immediately they descended into both sides of the road, starting to shoot on each side and we saw their positions. So once they started to shoot clear and they got up, we immediately started to shoot against them. So, then they were in total confusion, because on this side of the road was shooting to them and on this side. But the way we were placed in such a position that we should not, our fire shouldn't be shot against each other on the other side of the road. But in this particular time, the way the Germans laid themselves out, it was almost sort of the way it was meant to be, that our fire would go against them and not against our own across. So when we started shooting, when we started firing, all of a sudden, hands went up to the top. Those big heroes, the Germans, as well as the police, no longer were tough guys and they started to plead and beg. Ammunition on the side was collected and we started lining

up. Among the Germans over there, there were the Desunden Freur (ph). On our side of the perimeter, I was at that time a machine gunner and I had a Russian type of machine gun with a round disc on the top and I was placed from place to place were to attack and where to shoot. And before long I found out that we had a casualty of someone that I knew close, which was a girl, tall girl and a brave girl. She always used to go to battle whenever her brothers. She was with three brothers together and one of them used to be a machine gunner, used to, Anamoxinkas (ph), we used to call him. Anamoxinkas is a water-cooled machine gun. And her other brother, which it was the oldest one, became at that particular time the commander of the platoon, of the former Dr. Atlas's group. And she was the casualty of the day. She was shot from this, when I said the Germans started to shoot on this side, so she was a casualty and we just found it out. As I go on the other side to clear, to look for Germans or police who were either wounded or whatever it is, I come and near me I see another girl from the Rachen, which she was also with us all the time, Rasha Baskin (ph) is her name. I don't know her whereabouts today, because when I escaped the Soviet Union, she was, she remained behind and I have no contact with her. But, she spotted, she says, "Look, Harold. Look, Harold. Here's the Zundenfuer (ph)." . The Zundenfuer means that he was the head of the region from the Gestapo, and he was there. And as we approached him, I approached him now with the machine gun, she had at that time a rifle only in her hand, and he says to her, "Don't." And he starts pleading we shouldn't kill him, whereupon he pulls out a pocket from his pocket, photographs of the Rachen girls. Whatever this man, either he was in love with them or had love affairs with them or what, we at that time did not know. And neither did I want to listen, so I wanted to shoot. She starts pleading with me, "Harold he is mine. You're not going to kill him. I am." And she basically, with the rifle went and smashed his head to pieces, because after seeing the pictures of these girls, we know any SS guy or Gestapo who has pictures from girls which they used to do at practice, have sex with them, then taking pictures with them yet, understand. All of them, you know what I mean, to put into sort of their collections. Now, at one time, I must say, that I had to give a good reason and a good thanks to Rasha Baskin for killing a person. And it was beyond my personal belief, in a way, but in battle you see the enemy and you don't see anything else. And that's what it was. And we moved on. Of course, she says she's going to take his gun. I let her take his gun because trophies; there was plenty of ammunition for everyone to pick up. By that time, I had a German luger at that time that I took and I wanted to carry it, but at that time I turned it in to the command because what would I do for getting bullets for a German luger? It was easy for us to get bullets from Russian-type guns than to get for Germans. We used to get enough ammunition of theirs, but that was hard. Now, after the first battle line was over, our command ordered us to go back to position, only changing position because we expected that this will not be the last battle. So all of these killed, including the Zundenfuer (ph), the officer, our command ordered to go ahead, to strip their uniforms off of them and just naked and covering with a blanket, put them back on a horse and wagon and we took one of the farmers, send them to the city to turn in their corpses and give them a note, "Don't fight us, because that's the way you're going to see the rest of you come back." It's true enough that we were there and the following day the commander decided that we should be on guard again because they probably will send in

a second force. And they did. On the second force what they sent, that's why I could understand why they went to burn up the last bridge to us, but the first bridge to them. And the other two, we mined at this time, one at a time. They came with a light tank at this time and they came, again, Germans and they had the police which they were a makeup of Ukrainians and the other Russians and they started to do the same thing and we again let them cross that second bridge before the explosion was made. The explosion got at this time, caught that small task that they had. And it was done, you know, they couldn't have maneuvered; they would have to have heavy equipment to pull it out, which they came days afterwards to try to pull it out because of fear that the partisans may go ahead right now and re-build it. You know what I mean? They got espionage the same way as we did, to know what we were up to. And again that was battle line number two. We were still waiting and a couple of days later they sent a bigger force again and again at this time, we ensued battle and realizing the roar of the trucks that it came a big force. Our command decided to retreat and we retreated to the forest. Then they came in with a bigger force to the farmers at that time for the contingent what they had to get from them of the wheat, but at this time we could not control it. But the mere fact was that in order for them to collect the taxed wheat or provisions from the farmers, no longer could be gotten from these areas without a fight. So we achieved our purpose that we made this fight. Before long a change in all of that had happened. The Germans decided to build, as they called, a self-defense team. And in each settlement, they were ordered to join on doing that. They used to hang up a piece of rail or a bell and as soon as partisans would show in that vicinity, the bell or the rail piece would start making noise on the ring. It would carry from one settlement to the other, until it would come to the garrison. Then the police would have to come out, put some on ambush or come searching to catch the partisans.

Q: Who did this? The local people did it for the Germans?

A: Yeah. They did it for the Germans to alert them that partisans are out. And in the meanwhile, they would send a force against us. On three occasions, luck was with me, that I was struck on this type of ambushes. And either my number wasn't up or my alertness was good, that I was able to get off the wagon, because we used to use wagons to come there. And I shoved myself up, turned over on my belly, into the forest and three days later I showed up in camp, on each of these occasions. I don't mean on that particular day; on each of these occasions, when I came, I was looked upon like I returned from death because they already had given up on me, because a number of us used to be killed. And the command decided that no longer could that be tolerated. Otherwise, we would have to leave the area. And leaving the area was not saying we'll move on elsewhere. The elsewhere, if it works, it will work elsewhere the same way. Our command decided on teaching a lesson and we had to do it the German way. We took a farm area, the settlement was called Lansovicha (ph) and we surrounded it one morning with our troops. There were a few hundred people in participation. And the first thing, we waited for somebody to come and hitting the bell. Somebody did come and as soon as he hit the bell, machine gun was fired and that man was dead and more people who started

to run out of their houses, were dead. They realized the casualties and all of them began all of a sudden to be alert. We started a fire because their roofs were made out of straw and we had the special bullets, fire bullets, to start fire, on purposely to make a little panic. While a certain group of ours were taking charge of the livestock, everybody tried to drive their livestock out because they were afraid it will burn up, you know. So, while they were, the farmers were driving out, our people were taking over, lining them up and they were driven to the forest while our command decided to share this cattle among the poor farmers in the forest. That was left to be a lesson that any settlement that will cooperate with the Germans and will alert our moves, whatever partisans in the area, can expect the same treatment as Lansovich (ph). And that, after that, they didn't remove it, from there on, after that time that it happened, the farmers in the area understood that either, if you listen and do for the Germans, you'll get killed from the partisans. And if you listen the other way, you'll get killed from the Germans. So, therefore, they tried to play a little bit of a different game. And it no longer was the success as the Germans anticipated it would. The reason that Peklansavichy (ph) was because from that settlement, there were a number of guys serving in the police force in the Rachen. And we had our contact man who our command could get all information needed, because we also had local people who were working on our side and they were actually against the Germans and what they were doing. But, it had to be done in a hiding kind of way. The story, after that what had happened with that battle, changed. And really, here, at one time, we made almost like calling a massacre because quite a number of casualties. The farmers would go out and start pleading, "Don't burn, don't burn up my farm," and this and that and the other. And we knew the families that were there; the families of those policemen serving in the Rachen were all killed. So, be that you want to call it savagery for the sake of liberation, but we had to bring it down, that's what the command said in order to go on and act. However, we were more cautious. We started to drive-in other areas away, even to do our ammunition work, we did not go in the same format. We changed; we had to go further away from base in order to keep on doing. For instance, to give you an example, Zelva (ph) was the main station and we started operating, going bad things around Zelva. We would start crossing the Yemen on the other side, which it was the bigger forest. And certain changes in our operation was. However, all of that within a few months brought a big German Army who wanted to get even now with the partisans, realizing that. And at that particular time, the fighting ensued for almost a week. And we were surrounded for quite a big perimeter all the way around and afterwards our fight was not so much killing Germans as it was to work our way through a retreat, where we could go to a retreat in smaller groups through the bigger forest. Which we did. And in weeks later, in slow motion, with fewer people, we came back to the area but in other parts of the forest. So, not to leave, we suffered a tremendous amount of casualties at that particular time. And our reorganization was, I mean, the reorganization, speaking in the part of the Jewish partisans. On that particular march, I was near Captain Bulat (ph) and he was the staff leader. And he started the anti-Semitism, talking continually to me, and no matter how much defending I tried to do of the Jewish, it still was calling the Jewish all at once, he started to call them cowards. I said, "How can you call them cowards? Look at Balat. He kept all his guys, the Rachen boys, up in the front line. A few of them

died, got killed, and look how they held the Germans for a whole day in position, and the Germans could not come forward. Do you call that cowardness?" I says, "You and I, I was in front with a machine gun and you were a few hundred yards in back of me when you asked me to go into the settlement over there, to find out, to see if the German's are still there. Did I back off?" "No," he says. "You were good; you were a brave guy. I'm not talking about you." I said, "Then, why are you pluralizing it?" And after the talk all the time, the group of Atlas as we were to call them, as I have mentioned, the Dr. Atlas group, Lipsovich (ph) was the name of the commanding officer at the time, he come over to me, he says, "Harold, we were retreating. We cannot go on with this here whole group because look at the anti-Semitism. Two Jewish girls were shot because they dropped their discs. They were having the discs for the automatic weapons and while running and retreating, they dropped the discs, they shot the Jewish girls. There was no way out others could do." So, they pleaded with me; they said, "Harold, please come with us." I says, "No. I will not join you for one reason. I do not want to make Captain Balot right. I don't want for him to be able to pluralize it. So, while all of you are going, I wish you luck and I hope to meet you when it's all over. The next day after the Altas group left, Captain Balot got me again. "Harold, you remember our conversation? Look what happened to your cowards." I says, "Why do you confront me with them? I had nothing to do with them." I says, "What happened to them?" He says, "They all retreated." .

Q: Why don't you stop this. . . ?

A: The conversation ensued with all anti-Semitic flavor and he said, "They will be pushed once we go back to base." Within a couple of days later, we decided to return. So instead of going towards the forest, now we decided to return back to our bases. On our way back, we realized of how many settlements were burned by the Germans through the local area, and we realized was a big thing it will be right now for us to operate in these areas. And they decided to come back firstly, to where the Dr. Atlas group was usually taking place, although they were right nearby and we ran up on them. No sooner we came there, the order was everybody stays in place. I saw a friend of mine, Moses Agonik (ph), and he used to be a patrol guy who on the horse would always run forward for patrolling and finding out front line news. And I was a smoker at that time, and a heavy smoker. So badly, we used to take leaves and crush the tobacco and roll it in newspaper to smoke. It's hard to relate to everybody whoever smokes what a horrendous feeling that gives you to substitute, but that's what we did. I see Moses over there; I says, "Moe, can I get a cigarette from you?" I stepped out of line. No sooner that I stepped out of line, Buresbulat (ph) is there and Buresbulat starts acting up, now he wants to shoot me. He wants to shoot me right on the place. Now, being I'm among my good friends of commanders which I had Zeitsof (ph) who took me to the forest, Beshuti (ph), which it was another one; Misha Dubokof (ph), and third one, and a few more came over. No, you're not going to shoot him; you're not going to kill him. As they were my messiahs, in a way of speech. And he didn't do it. "Why did you step out of line?" I says, "I didn't step out; just one foot, to get a cigarette from him." "I said and I ordered, no one steps out of line, and you did." Basically, I realized that it was no more, no less, but the anti-Semitism

in here, that he continued talking with me about; that's what it was. But I was on the watch at that time. Before long, they started to order, they wanted to shoot two more of the Rachen girls, who they understand, dropped their discs and we had one guy who was a Rachen guy, Benjamin Denbrovsky (ph); he used to be like the hang man. Any time somebody had to be executed, Benjamin used to be the one to be called. So, now Bulot has given him the assignment to take these two girls and he should go after them and shoot them. Well, an order is an order, so he went and the girls called and instead of him shooting them, he told them, "We are running. I will not kill you. Stay with me." They all, at that particular time, ran. When they did not hear any shots, they followed. They killed the girls, but Ben, they couldn't get hold of. He survived the war at , which it was a trap for Jews mainly, and that's where he survived. Because for him, disobeying an order for not shooting, he would have been killed. He survived the war about Bensky (ph) and I met with him after the war. So, --.

Q: Was there a lot of this justice system going on in the forest?

A: Well, at that particular time, as I am about to tell you, the system still did not work officially under the Soviet bases, but it was just beginning to be. But since that was the big fight and the big onslaught by the Germans going on over there and the casualties that we suffered and when it was going on. Above all, what it got them worse is, they came and they found that what did the Atlas guys do, they were cooking a whole kitchen where they had the chickens. And it was fine; you know what I mean? That was another part that Jews liked chicken. That was another fallacy, you know, what I mean, for anti-Semitism. Why did I have chickens? Since I aforementioned that so many places were burned out, there were a lot of chickens flying around on the loose, with no one now to take care of. So, they went away, cut the chickens, killed them and cooked them. So, he did not even try. Before long, Heir Libshovens (ph), the commander gave an order to his men. He saw what was going on and he saw the anti-Semitism. They surrendered to our group. His platoon was bigger at that time than the group we were, with machine guns and he went out talking to Bolot (ph). "Are you going to call to order now and go back to staff and re-hash all the things, or are you going to out right now? Remember one more move and we are going to use our machine guns." And that's what attended for the day, the stuff returned. And Dr. Atlas group no longer was commanded by Leibshovitz, but Shuben became its commander and the group received a few more non-Jews. So, to make a tone out of it, it looked like this: when things were bad, like they used to say in Polish, . When it's bad, go ahead to start getting on the Jews. We were the blame, the scapegoats for everything, even at a time like this, in the forest. So maybe this is again one reason why not more Jews came to the forest. It was not because of anything else, because they had no ways of how to make contacts with the forest. The guys in the forest were not interested at that time to save Jews. They were interested just to fight a war against the Germans. But we did not have any helping hand to help Jews to survive. We survived because we were there fighting but not because somebody tried to help us survive. And, unfortunately, that's the case; that's the way it was. This was a bad to swallow at that particular time because all of a sudden, the reorganization, I myself was sending from

one, and I asked at that time, Zatsov and Buchlet. They say, "Harold, I cannot keep you under my wing. You might as well go to join . That's the order that you got." So I was resettled to another place. The Abromov (ph) becomes my new home, sort of to be with them. And that went on until a few months later, when the paratroopers joined us under the auspices of the General Costenko (ph) or we used to call him, Capusten (ph). And I joined, I joined him, not because of my, I was assigned to join him. And maybe that was another way of Abromov to get me out of, you know what I mean; not to be over here. And I and Polachek (ph), the other one who were assigned there, and at that time, I became platoon commander beforehand, but still and though, even my being the platoon commander, he singled out me and Polachek, the two, to go to be with the paratroopers. And a new leaf in the history of the partisans had started at that particular time in our area.

Q: This is, the date approximately?

A: I beg your pardon. That was already 1943.

Q: Now, why don't we change here because he's just got a minute left.

End of Tape #7

Tape #8

- A: Because that was leading up to that attack that we had another attack by the Germans, to get even with us. That was, now we are talking of 1943, in the Spring.
- Q: Okay. The other thing that, I know you've talked about this in different ways, but it's a little confusing is, there are all these different bands, and I'm wondering how coordinated your activities were. I mean, there are all these different groups out there. I understand there was a battle to destroy a garrison in the town that you had come from, Rachen (ph)?
- A: Correct.
- Q: Can you tell me a little bit about that? Were you involved?
- A: Yes, I was very much involved. As coming near Zotzof and Pescholey (ph) at the time, and Misha Dubokov knew of me, and I was the one selected to take the commerce from the big massacre in the Rachen to which company, and we were pleading with the command, I and the same thing, Somek Burnstein (ph) that please, let us go and attack the Rachen, less us go and attack the Rachen. But the command still did not want to listen to us before the massacre happened. However after the massacre in the Rachen happened, and from that massacre to the forest, I would . The people who were in the family camps to those who were assigned in the various command posts, in companies, I would say that may be 100 to 120 people were saved of a population in the ghetto, for at least seven or eight hundred. That's how victorious the Germans were of killing the Jews. They did not take them anymore to the big dig that they had in the forest, but rather in the holes that were left from the bombs in the middle, the center of town, that's where they killed them out. And some of them they even killed in the ghetto and burned afterwards the whole ghetto with them. So those of them who weren't hiding, had little chance to survive. And that is, perhaps, was why the number of us are living. Now, . . .
- Q: Can we just ask you for an approximate date, here?
- A: Let's see. That would have to probably be, when was it in your time, 1943, the last massacre, or '42?
- Q: '42.
- A: That's what I thought it was, '42. We are talking about now, when we attacked the Rachen was at the tail end of summer. Or mid-summer of 1942. So, at that particular time with having so many more people, survivors of the Rachen, everybody sort of was looking for a little vengeance on the police, a little vengeance on the Germans for the massacre that they carried out. And command was knowing that we can get a lot of trophies in ammunition and everything like that, because they will not fight, no more than they didn't fight as before in other ambushes. And they mustered up the force in all the

areas and all the partisans were divide in about four groups to make it so that we gave them only one area from where to escape and all the other areas that they tried to escape, they had to fall into our fire. I was assigned at that time to a group with Zitsof (ph) which I was with him together. We both were having, he was having a machine gun and I was having a machine gun and while he had the machine gun, he was commanding also his flock. In other words, of his line, whatever he had to do. We decided to attack about dawn, while it was still dark, about maybe at the hours between 5 and 6 in the morning. Our forces began to move in the area at night, so really our forces did not have time to rest, but in small groups. You could not move about five, six hundred partisans all to come in at one time. So everybody was using a different direction and it took them the night hours to come to be in place.

Q: On foot, mostly?

A: On foot. Some of them were on horses. The ones who were searching areas and contact man with him, but all the troops were on foot. No other way. And the contact men only were on horses so that they could be able to speed up to tell from the command, you know, we did not have no radios or anything like that at that time. So, we started mustering the forces at night because by night, the movement could be not so visible as to alert the garrison that something is going on. We decided there has to be attack early in the morning. The signal was a rocket that I would shoot in the air from my horse. And once the rocket was shoot, fire starts and with the words of "Hurrah," the Russian way, our men begin. The machine guns that were meant near the police first, we shot them out immediately because we made the forest, by the time they realized it was an attack, and to muster the police who were asleep, and the Germans, we already were near the buildings, surrendered and hand grenades began flopping from everywhere. So the Germans and the police did not ensue in a fight for more than about an hour in all, put together. And all they were doing is looking for places where to run. We collected quite a number of them prisoners of war and the prisoners were tied, their hands in the back and were immediately sent to the forest, and which, later on, they would stand trial and they were convicted, in other words to die. And they were one by one shot in the presence of the partisans. And, at that particular time, we were very overwhelmed of how little an effort it was to knock the garrison out, because really there looks like did not have chance enough to build a position. However, I must make a point here; after it was all over and the garrison retreated back, that's when around this here garrison where the police force was staying, they built a wall with bunkers that if we were to have this here kind of building before, we would never be able to succeed to attack. We made use of the time, since the Rachen was a slaughter house, that the slaughter house became busy, slaughtering meat, and it was salted down into wooden barrels and sent to the forest by a contingency of partisans that we had who were capable of making salami and so on, and they were salted down as to food and scattered around the various parts of the forest, which only a few people knew. So, in the event we should have been surrounded and not be able to go out, that we should be able to have supplies for where to survive. My good friend, Barnovsky, (ph) was leading on, we told of this year, doing, he was a butcher by

trade and he knew the art of making the salami and all of that do. So, he was leading and it became a very busy place, that slaughter house. To tell you, we kept it for almost three months and until the Germans decided to make an onslaught and come back to return to their bases. With Zidsov (ph) as I went into a house, I came into a Gentile person who knew even my grandparents. And he touched me badly, the way he said it in Russian, " , " which translated into English, means, "Are you still alive?" And it rubbed me the wrong way. Had I not had Commander Zitsov with me, I would have ended him right there. But being with my Commander Zitsov with me, I pretended that I didn't take it, instead of him showing the joy that I am alive, he asked me, "Are you still alive?" So, and that rubbed me in the wrong way and he ordered us, he ordered for him and his wife to make breakfast for us and a few more from the command came into the same house. And even though we had to drink and to eat, but these few words never left me. And I had a hard time, sort of, forgetting about it, that even after I left all of my family and lost them over here, that that man would have the audacity to ask me, one person who remained alive, in these words, with his cruel words: "Are you still alive?" And he thought that that was a way of greeting me. In other words, that he sort of jokingly thought. I did not make any mention in front of my commander, but my anger was burning in me, coming back in the places where I did not even know which of the holes my family is buried, you know. Because they threw lime afterwards on it and it was brought to burial, the area, after the war when the partisans returned to the Rachen. It was a big piece of news for the whole area, because the respect date. And what we invited upon ourselves, after that forest, after that Rachen occupation and what we do. That the Germans had to bring a tremendous force in surrendering all the forest, extending maybe in diameter, maybe 30 to 40 miles. Which, again, for the Soviet Union, it served a good purpose. When they have to take in one area to use so much military to do a big job like that, the front line is . That's when the Soviets were winning. But, it was a lot of casualties on our part and that Fall, when they made, because we were so sure of ourselves that we became too cocky. We used to travel by day, coming to the Rachen; going here and doing there. We thought there is no forest that it can stop us. And this is the time that we relaxed a little bit too much and the casualties happened. So then we heard the forest coming in, we started on the edge of the forest from all places to put up, at that time, a defense. And we didn't wait for them to attack us, we started to attack them, realizing the kind of forest and the kind of fighting that no longer were we dealing with the police, the local alone, but at this time we were dealing with a trained Army. So, our command immediately recognized the situation and they broke through an area in a few places to make it, and we were ordered to retreat. We retreated until the forest almost around Vilda (ph). It was very, a traumatic move at that time for us, that all of a sudden, we had to, I would say in miles, I would say we must have retreated about 150 yards from our base. The good part of a base was that we knew the names of the settlements. We knew which way it leads. And then you come in a strange place altogether, it was hard to go ahead to carry out any of the type of work that they did over there. So it was a set back port partisans. The good news however was that after that, we saw the paratroopers come in to the area. So, 1943, about mid, we decided to organize a new action.

- Q: I want to go back for a moment. You have mentioned on and off a Dr. Atlas. I believe he was also involved in that battle, so I want you to tell me something about him. Who was he? What kind of a man he was? What he was doing?
- A: At the battle of the Rachen, Dr. Atlas was involved. And he retreated away from the Rachen quickly. Not with his troops, because he had some medical missions that he had to attend to at that particular time. While he was the commander, he still used to attend to certain patients, which was farmers. His good rule, what he did to the farmers helped us with leads of informers that we could get. And because they wanted Dr. Atlas to continue with the work, we prospered with it. So, yes; he was in the battle. He originally was leading his platoon over there to the Rachen, but he after it was over, the fight was over, he had to retreat. His men remained there. Now, for instance, we knew a few casualties of the Rachen boys who did lose their life, like I mentioned before. Benjamin Dumbrovsky, he lost his brother at that particular time. But all the casualties we had were due to bravery; they were really fighting and they really wanted to see and show the police over there that somebody has got to be accountable for the way they did in that massacre against the Jews so well.
- Q: Did his platoon come from that area?
- A: The platoon that he was leading was, I would say, about 80 percent of the Jewish people who came from the Rachen and they came after the massacre of the Rachen. That's why they were so eager in the fight of to go back and sort of, vengeance was a good driving force in them, to do what they were doing at the present time. So, it was not ideology in part, all the way, that they were trying to fight for the Soviets, but a lot of times it was vengeance against those who did so cruel to our families there. So his platoon remained until afterwards when the General's staff ordered everybody to retreat. Because after the first day, or the second day, we used to go back by day to the forests and by night come and still do that. We did not want to get caught in the big forest that the Germans should go ahead. So we used to have, more or less, platoons, a platoon maybe would stand guard and about on the lookout over there. But the whole Army was where we were, about five or six hundred partisans, were sent back to their bases. Dr. Atlas was also a DP like I was myself. I knew him not like I knew, for instance, the other doctors; no.
- Q: But you came in contact with him?
- A: Yes. It's worth mentioning here, about Dr. Atlas's past. He was a displaced person, like I. He was someplace from Poland. And that man practiced medicine all the time and with the German onslaught, the way it happened, he decided to be treating patients on the outside. So he, instead of remaining in the ghetto, was away from the ghetto and he used to, sort of, be the doctor of the farmers. And they did not disclose him from the Germans, to the Germans, rather. With the onslaught and organization of partisans, as soon as he heard about partisans in the area, he came voluntarily and joined but he still maintained a good relationship with the farming area over there and they became very useful to the

partisans, right now for the information. He was a man about my height, slimmer than me, I mean you know, I wasn't as fat as I am now, but a little slimmer. And he had one thing, you could see fire in this man, talking to his guys all the time about vengeance and fight. "When you going to fight, fight to the end. Fight to win." And he was a good leading commander. We had a lot more of, in Buloks. Bulok was a local commander who had mostly Gentiles, or the other Russians, not so much of the Soviets, true Soviets, who remained in the area that didn't go into the prisoners of war. But he organized his group mostly from his settlement area and around there. So the people, as I say, his group, they all used to ride more, a lot on horses. So, they would come because they had their own farms and so on. So a lot of them used to have to man the farms, and at night, whatever the partisans needs was today, they would be working on that front line, too. But the unfortunate situation happens, Dr. Atlas, in one of the big ambushes, which it was following after the liberation of the Rachen, that's when Dr. Atlas is killed in battle. So, I mean, he didn't die just a normal death. He was killed while fighting, being a fighter and commanding. That's when the takes over. That man, I just mentioned, unfortunately meets his death in , in Poland, while on his way escaping the Soviet Union, and while on the way in a kubutz (ph) which it was illegal immigration to go to Israel. And being outside on patrol, a Polak shot and killed him. As you've heard perhaps or not, that in and in other parts of Poland, after 1945, when the war as over, and the Jews were running from the camps or from hiding, they still were not ready to give away what they robbed from the Jews, so they had one way of doing it: kill them. And therefore, we know later on, what went on in Poland. So, a lot of these guys like , met their death after liberation. And it was a big hurt to feel that a guy was patriotic all the way and that that was the way for him to die. So, why almost after three years in the forest, or two and a half years, rather, and being in battle and to come out all right. In the forest he only lost his sister. His brothers, the other two brothers that survived, to the best of my knowledge, are in Israel.

Q: Now, we have I guess about ten more minutes and I'm wondering. There are two thoughts that I have. Either, and maybe you can explain to me about this reorganization that took place?

A: Yep.

Q: Or possibly tell me about an experience, or running into family camps, whichever you think is appropriate at this point?

A: Well, I can tell you first about the family camps, rather than getting into this subject, because that's a more lengthy subject to talk about. I did not mention at great length, that in the forests there were also family camps. However, let us make clear about it. When I use that word, family camps, I only mean others an expression. It was not a camp of people with families or elderly, that they were supervised by others. It's just that they were, sort of, not elected to be able to be among the fighting force. And therefore, when we came to the forests, escaping from the massacres, there was only one thing for them to

do, and that was to be in the forest. So, a lot of them, a majority of them who were capable, joined one company or the other and they were there. And those who couldn't, for instance, had the lot left to them to be there. Every time the Germans attacked the forest, the ambush or otherwise, the big forest or small forest, the family camps were the first prey that they attacked. And at times, it was, they were going home, sort of, with victory, thinking that they killed partisans while they actually, the one that they killed was the ones in the family camp. Because as soon as the shooting was started, not too far where we were in our camps, so we would exactly, at that particular time join and attack them instead of. And from the family camps, they had an easy prey. All they could throw is a few hand grenades, open up a machine gun and boom, then they found them. So, those who were living in hiding survived the massacre, or the onslaught. Those who were not living in hide outs, but they just lived in the open, you know. They were first prey. So, the other part was, while we had so many fighting groups, really, no one cared to provide the family camps with provisions, even food or clothing. However, some of them had relatives, brothers or other ones, in the fighting camps, which they would care to bring something. But, it was never an organized effort by the partisans, in the area that I was in. I don't know what it was in other forests; maybe in other forests it was different. But, I believe that we would have heard about it and know about it. They were an open prey. They escaped. At times, they used to have problems with the partisans. The partisans, especially the women, and there were younger girls; the partisans, in most cases the Gentiles, would come and rape them, attack them in this way. So they were open prey to all kinds of enemies: our local enemies, the partisans which they couldn't protect themselves from, and against the Germans and the police when they would attack and they would normally, you know what I mean, pick their spots as of their probably spies them where they were located and that's what it would be.

Q: Did, do you think that Jewish members of the partisans ever took advantage of the family camps in that way?

A: The Jewish guys used to help one way or the other, the family camp. But, that was, again, a not official way, it was an unofficial way. That we would sometimes drop some food over there. But we were starting to stop over there to visit and usually we would come with some food leaving them. But it was not a case that a command told us, "Hey, why didn't you deliver some potatoes from wherever you can, or something else, to the family camp?" The family camps were strictly left on their own and if we were to have the figures at hand and starting to make justification or comparisons, we would find that the biggest amount of casualties as per amount coming to the forest, was from the family camps.

Q: Was there constant enemy presence? I mean, were you always afraid of bombing and advances?

A: That was the life, at that time. It was war and we were in that war. It did not matter perimeter, where the front line is. To us, the front line was everywhere, because we

never, we used to catch here and there spies, would come running in the forest that the Germans sent. They used to send in ex-POWs, you know what I mean, which they sent in. We found them with maps and insignia on them. And of course, when we found them, they met death, you know what I mean? But, it was officially, you know. The company would come out and it would be read the order, who and what it was discovered and therefore, they were executed. But, it was in a military kind of a way. So, to tell you, the forests were full of all kind of problems, while they served of a lot of help, to help Jews survive. But, it did not happen as a means for Jewish survival. It happened because the way it happened to be that it served as the base for survival. But they were not with open arms, let us get Jews in. Jews were not taken in so easily, like I told you when I was, before when I was coming in there. What do you think? We have ammunition for them? That was not the case. The case is, if you're out to help or to save, that's the salvation. But if not, that's the case we don't have, how are we going to take in more? And again, when we were talking about attacking the Rachen, before the massacre, that was our main course; that was to come in to tell them that a young people will join us. But they did not want to hear but we will take the Rachen after the massacre, where we could have saved so much more lives.

Q: During this period of time, did you have one moment or one episode that was the most terrifying to you, or was this just the life?

A: If there was one episode, I don't know which way to place it. I was on a mission at one time to save one Jewish girl from the Rachen, who a policeman at the massacre, he looks like he was in love with her and she was in love with him, save her and took upon himself to take him to his farm, where his parents were, and they kept her there. And all of a sudden, we got word in the forest that Sonia no longer can stay. She became the wife later of who I have mentioned before, who was a commander. But sent me for one reason or another only that I came telling her, there's a young girl, good looking, and if you want me to bring her here, you'll have a girl. So, it was sort of like you cannot say that the interest of the commander to permit me to go on that mission to save her was of humane? No, it wasn't of humane. It was, the was a nice man and he later winds up being with her after the war was over. But he, it was just a matter of exchange, sort of; you know what I mean? Who cares? And I risked my life, although I wasn't a native from that city. But I was there, again, because the Dr. Atlas group probably had the same thing and the question would always be, how come they didn't? I did it for one basic reason. The news came to us through a contact and I went to and told him. And he says, "Would you want to go to bring her?" I says, "Yes. She's a nice woman." And I brought her. But it was a big risk for me, a one-man operation, to go to organize it, through our contact man. Which I did through the prior knowledge of the staff. The staff would never have permitted me to do a thing like that. You know. The staff would have said to me, "Sure, she wants to come? Meet her halfway. Meet her at the edge of some settlement from the forest and if she comes there, you'll take her. But I risked and I had to make them believe that I'm here with a little Army to surrender. And she was dressed like a little farm girl and she came out over there and when we meet, I sort of started to pretend that there is

the other guys, all came with me. And until I was in the forest, she herself thought that what I'm talking is really something. And the whole night it took me to walk until in the morning until I brought her. So, is that an important case? Was the onslaught in the Rachen when I was in full and important case? Was when we attacked? Again, when I was next to the Howitzer and we were doing. And it was a big fight there. That's an important part for me to tell about that fight because the Jewish heroes were there.

End of Tape #8

Conclusion of interview.