

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Harold Zissman

May 24, 1995

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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Harold Zissman, conducted by Randy Goldman on May 24, 1995 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Lauderhill, FL and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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HAROLD ZISSMAN

May 24, 1995

- Q: Before we get into some of the specific battles, I wanted to ask you a few general questions about when you were with the partisans. It seemed like there were a lot of different groups. How coordinated were you all?
- A: Talking about 1943, at that particular time, there was a total coordination.
- Q: You mean, when the Soviets came in?
- A: I mean, when we had contact with Moscow.
- Q: Prior to that?
- A: But prior to that, there were a lot of groups on their own. Be that they were fighting for the same cause, when I mean the same cause, I mean that there were Soviet partisans. Or at the same time, there were other type of partisans which I had before mentioned. We used to call them "the white." When we talk about Soviets, we always talk about red, so, therefore, the white Poles, for instance, those were Polish partisans who were against the Soviets, while they also were against the Nazis. And to top it all off, they also were against the Jews.
- Q: This is the AK?
- A: That was the AK, which is called Army Krajowa. In other words, the land army or nationalist army, which they were. And they really had, to the best of my knowledge, they were very much supported from London, England. That they were, because Chechovky (ph) was one of them, which it was the former marshal sort of in Poland. And there were people who were -- the Polish, who were saved from the outbreak of war who retreated to England. And from there they sort of carried on a certain amount of work.
- Q: You had contact with them?
- A: Well, we had contact with them, be that we, that we got some of their guys sort of by way of surrounding them and knowing what was going on. It was our job to know who the enemy was. And really who the enemy was, besides the Germans, was a big story to tell about it, because they had implants in all of these here ways in order for them to know what's going on. And every once in a while, as I aforementioned in my other chapters, was that we located some prisoners. We found prisoners who sort of came -- we knew there were many POWs who joined the ranks of the partisans that were specific spies, German spies, implants. And we learned how to discover the way they were signified by the Nazis. They would have a tatoo maybe underneath the arm just like the Gestapo would have. And some of them, which for hiding purposes, when we started to undress them, we found maps that they were carrying with them. And we knew that a guy who escapes a Prisoner of War Camp is not

equipped with a map, and he's not equipped with a compass or anything like that because that would have been foolish to think. So that suspicion -- and believe me, we made them talk. The command made them talk, and this is how we knew of the various groups. Before going too long, I would like to mention at this point here that my wife lost a brother to one of these here AK types you already identified them by their name, or I call them the National Polish Partisan Group. But he and another young kid -- they both were of the age of 14, 15, and their best job to be invisible at their work is because they were kids. And their job used to be more to go, as we call them, to the trains. They would look through main rails, and those kids, they were not so visible -- and plant a mine over there and then go off. And then there would be other explosions. They were caught by this, which it was on the other side of Niemen, as we called it. The other side of the river. And they were caught up, and needless to say, that they were immediately recognized to be Jews. And for that reason alone, they were killed and shot. Nothing else, you know. So first their being kids. Second, they were partisans, maybe the priority would have been Jews -- that they were Jewish, and that's what it was. So evidence like this, it was known to us. As I will enter a little bit later, telling you on one time that we were purposely sent like masqueraded in disguise of the Polish partisans because our command definitely wanted to implant partisans on the other side of the Niemen near Grodno and we were on a search missions, which I will tell it when I come to this part of talking about , yes.

Q: What I'm trying to understand is that -- there were different groups that were Soviet partisans. Before everything was coordinated through Moscow, was there any order to this? Was there any coordination?

A: It was coordination that a command would meet sometimes together and talk about certain work and plans, if it was planned a coordinated attack. So this guy would be on flanked, and this partisan would use so many men, the other one. So to say that there was coordination, yes. But it wasn't the kind of coordination by command and so on. In other words, a staff was organized in 1943 before we made full contact with the paratroopers that were sent to us. Because at the same time, which I must tell you, in that same year a little bit later, drops from planes through the night became visible even in our area, while before it used to be just in the big forest. But they would drop to us supplies, and with these supplies came messages, and so on in the same way. The supplies were weapons mostly. Not so much that it was of foodstuff or anything like that, but that was -- and later on in '43, we had radio operators with us who were in constant contact with Moscow, as well as the other outposts of staff.

Q: While we're on this, well, you might as well tell me how things changed in '43, because this seems to be where we're headed.

A: Well, I touched base in earlier part, but here specifically, for instance, when we're talking about the attack, where we attacked the garrison in Ruda Slaska. This was already an organized from all, because the participation was flanked by all the partisans in maybe located in 30-mile distance -- 30 mile, I mean square mile -- throughout all the forest. But various groups were brought in, be that they were ambushed, be they were in the fighting,

and it was a real preplanned because for the first time, we were shown off at that time a Panzer truck and we were shown up at that particular time -- that Panzer truck drove in in the vicinity nearby. Not exactly. And the first shot was fired from a cannon, which it was something again hard to believe that we mustered that, but it was done because we heard originally before attack that they built up bunkers. Now, to specify who they are, which is found on the map, that would have been on the main road. The main road we're talking about was a dirt road going through the forest. It was not a real road to the extent of the woods road, what we mean. And it was leading between the _____ between towards Gotha, Osweja, and from there you used to go to Lida. So, in other words, it was all dividing the forest with that road. And there settlements away from the road, not too far, where farmers used to have their farms. And mostly the soil over there was not too good for other than to grow potatoes on. So these farmers, their livelihood came in normal times that they used to work in the forest, be lumberjacks, or so on. In Ruda Slaska, there was also plains where they used to make turpentine and tar, which it was again a derivative from this here pine trees that were growing over there. So that was implied a good way for us to make that we could sort of the forest -- we were all limited for miles and miles away, without roads. That was the main important issue to talk about. There was only one leading road, and that road was in Ruda Slaska. And, as I said preceding this here chapter, while I was speaking of the attack that we had on the Russian and that there came back reinstalled a new now garrison in the Russian. At the same time, while we retreated, as I aforementioned, they put up that garrison in Ruda Slaska. Ruda Slaska garrison, while it was serving the area, was basic a service area for the Germans to control the forest. And, therefore, they chose over that to be Ukrainians, which they were former -- they were with General Lasso (ph), an army who turned around, and instead of fighting the Germans, joined the Germans. And the Germans made their darned best to utilize to their advantage General Lasso's (ph) army, so that garrison, while it had I am sure some Germans in it too, was basically Ukrainians. Where, again, the Ukrainian language versus the Soviet language is sort of similar to each other, so it was -- and we had in our midst a lot of Ukrainians, who were former Soviet fighters, rather soldiers who did not want to retreat or become POWs and remained in the forest. Because, as I said, that was a party out of the partisans. So, therefore, it was for the Germans a new kind of thing to bring in an enemy who it was harder for us to control, because they knew they were permitted Ukrainian. They didn't necessarily have to speak German while they learned already to speak German. So that became the biggest, sort of in a way, a trap to our existence because it was too close for comfort. They could, for instance, if they wanted to make an attack of artillery on the forest they could have at any given time, you know, attack with certain shells. And you don't know which way or where, but it would have definitely made a big problem to the farmers and to us. So that's when the command decided not to wait what is going to be later, but they by all costs, which I mean cost of lives, that we must attack and we must destroy that garrison. First of all, that no other garrison should be planted around, sort of in that -- and we organized. Again, it was already the staff, the General's staff, which was controlling and they brought in forces from all kinds and the innovation, like I said, from the artillery. And the Panzer trucks, sort of as to call it, was issued there. It was a hard battle for us for the first time to ensue because supplies of ammunition were hard for us. It was either to buy food or to buy horse, that they could supply to us. And no matter how much

ammunition we all carried with us, we never carried enough ammunition to ensue a battle three or four hours. And that's what the battle was, and we succeeded -- only because of that artillery fight, we succeeded to drive them out. Meaning, they retreated, so they came back at a time later and restarted again. But our satisfaction was that we showed the enemy, well, you have no safety ground over here. And from there on, the miserable life ensued until liberation. It was the last year, sort of, for us of the war, and we were talking about the year right now, let's say, between August of 1943 to about August 1944. But those forests a year later became liberated by the Red Army. So that was the hardest year to survive as a fighting or partisans at all in the forest.

Q: But that, too, the fact that at this time everything was coordinating through Moscow. You were able to get more and better supplies, and that there was really system, I guess.

A: Yes. And a command.

Q: Yeah. How did that change the way you operated?

A: Okay. Before a command of a group, as I said, firstly the names have changed. It was no longer Zychov's (ph) group or Bullock's (ph) group or Fredia Kommunar'sk's group. All of sudden, there was names, for instance, at that particular time. We started to hear organizing of the kids. We started to hear Russian names of heroes. You know what I mean, to be named, you know what mean? And this is the way it had gone on to a total change that the Soviet ties to the all extent that even the name. The other innovation was that all of a sudden, it began to get the commissars. And the commissars, as you have probably heard over about it, they were political commanders. So while even at a time as we were, we still had to give our ears to these political commissars. To hear the stories of Communism and Socialism and what their aim is and all of that. So this was a big kind of innovation that it's sort of in a way unbelievable. How was it going to happen? Yes, it did. In other words, no matter what we were exposed to, we must have been exposed to politicizing the situation in the same way. The second -- the third change was -- I already said the name changed, the command post and so on. The third was that from now on, no commander was a commander that he made his own decisions. Any operation, even for instance, the territory was divided from where we draw our supplies and which type of farmers could we come to get supplies from. In other words, sort of not attack our own. So before it was we knew the area, the commander knew, for instance, in these here settlements don't go barter because we got too many of our own people. So we don't even go to ask them not to give food. We would come and take, let's say, cattle or whatever it is, and give them a receipt, so that when the Red Army came, you will be paid for it. We knew it's not -- you know what I mean, but that was the way it went on, sort of to make it official, other than it used to be saying we robbed the farmers for food. Well, too, I don't say you don't because certain times like when the situation was bad, we were blockaded, we couldn't help it; we had to carry things on on our own. But in the most of the cases, the territory was divided that this and this companies go for their needs here and there. And other companies use someplace else, and that's the way it was. When a battle needed to be organized, it was decided in the general staff.

Q: Was this an improvement or a problem?

A: As a Jew we feel it improved one thing, that we sort of felt we were not an open prey. That there's more authority; however, individually meeting up as used to call them the "Easterners" was touching. That's how we used to refer to them. Those who were the paratroopers who were thrown down. Jokes still went on. We saw a big change, the _____ came to be used to show off the command of a lieutenant or captain, while before they used to make them on the collar, you know what I mean the way it was. So we saw a new, different insignias. Different changes. But above all, our fear for anti-Semitism, we felt -- because we had, for instance, in our midst talking about the political commissar, Captain Bavidoff (ph), and he was leading his group which it was strictly a political commissar with printing little newsletters and all of this. And he was Jewish himself, sort of, you know, it's sort of you felt you have somebody who you can depend on. So to put it together in capsule, anti-Semitism, perhaps, changed to be a little bit less because of that. However, it still was in there. It was a poison ivy that we couldn't get rid of it, and we couldn't get rid of it as far as identifying many instances. And maybe we were too much in pain to accuse easily anti-Semites, but it was not just easily. It was many, many subjects that either were bold enough to see that it was anti-Semitism.

Q: But it got better?

A: Yes.

Q: So what happened next? I know we've these events to talk about, but . . .

A: Well, the Ruda-Slaska battle, as you see, I capsulized it very small because I don't want to take up. And the next battle will be Cozlo-Chechnya (ph).

Q: But let me just ask you a question. At some point later you joined the Red Army, but this was -- no, you didn't?

A: What do you mean? I personally?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: No, I never joined the Red Army. No.

Q: Okay.

A: I was only along with them from the partisans, yes.

Q: Okay. So what do you want to tell me about this next battle?

A: Okay. Just as Ruda Slaska was a very important thing for us to knock out, and we were freed for about a few months, that they were knocked out. So (a) it was satisfaction. On the other side, controlling the other main artery which it was a much better road -- going through it wasn't like a forest road -- was Cozlo-Chechnya (ph). The Germans managed that after so many miles apart they sort of build garrisons of controlling certain landmarks to be of their own, utilizing the local militia, the local people, which they were in the militia, and few Germans. You got to remember the importance of that particular time, the Germans said to make an elite force out of them. Well, their elite force was to killing the Jews in these here special groups, which they were doing in Byelorussia and Ukraine and killing them on the spot. So rounding up Jews to kill from the ghettos or otherwise, that was their elite force. They had everything one could wish for, and they always were told, "If you don't do that, you're going to be sent to the front lines." And the sending to the front lines to face the Russian front was a big punishment because, as history told us and we know already with Marshal Polis (ph) at that time, which would be the armies which the big rift did happen. And the Soviet's Army at that particular time was fighting really to the bitter end. There was no retreating and no giving up, so if it meant one-on-one fights after when it happened and the Germans retreated, it was that. So the Germans did not have that 10 days with Moscow that originally the way in '41, that was their slogan. Within 10 days they'll be in Moscow. They realized that by 1943 how fast only was how fast are they retreating, and they did not want to retreat faster than they were beat out. So the Germans used to keep that to their forces. Hey, if you're not going to behave well, you go to the front lines. To the Russian front lines. So a lot of the local people were given a choice. If you do not want to be drafted to go to the front lines, you have a choice to serve in the militia. So a lot of them who did want either escaped and joined the force. So we had another incoming force because of that. And those people became good fighters, because they were fighting for their own local causes. So they built there for, like I said, Ruda Slaska over here. Cozlo-Chechnya, which it was an ended field say between Slonium and on the way like we were going to Lida, so that was a big post that they built a big garrison. And that garrison was taking care of all of these area. This was a new trick again that our command devised. That while we wanted to attack Cozlo-Chechnya (ph), we didn't directly come to attack it there, but we went to attack another place. The other place was a big bridge. It was a wooden bridge over the Niemen River in Melnitsa was the name of that little town nearby. So we sent forces in setting up, you know, places setting up in hiding and I was -- the forces to jump out in case the German police come going there. So we set up ambushes on them, so we came, poured gasoline, naphtha, whatever we could get a hold of, including turpentine on that wooden bridge. And we started to set a fire. We knew that once that bridge is going to go a fire, and that would be dropped a tremendous communication on a main road like this here. That the Cozlo-Chechnya (ph) outpost over there would go, everybody would go out to come there to fight the partisans while putting out the fire at the same time. It worked. No sooner they started to run and that was about 30 miles away. No sooner all their vehicles and we saw them in from Lida posts. The way they're starting to run towards that bridge that we set a fire, we attacked them. And then easily with a few troops that were left in there, so it was no problem for us to take over. It was one Jew, we used to call him "The Bearded Moses." And he was a short man with a beard and he was the most heroic person known in that battle of Cozlo-Chechnya

(ph). He by that time had killed about 15 policemen, until the 16 policemen from the back saw it. You know what I mean, that what he is there. He ended him and with a single bullet killed sort of our -- The Bearded Moses. And he was well known in the area for his heroism and so on. So, as I started to say, we captured; we had a big battle and the Howitzer was the sounding of time that we sent out. Which again, it was a new type of cannon, and I was at the moment serving near the Howitzer as the second man. And between all the partisans which they were needed to be -- so two parts. It wasn't a matter that this group, that group, all partisans who were on the force were taking place on that battle. And within a few hours, no sooner they found out over there, we told their people coming out, they started to go back. As they started to go back, they were engaged in fire with us, because we attacked them. So it was not just the garrison itself. They suffered tremendous casualty and they suffered the prestige that once more the partisans were able to come and knock out the major post connecting and even threaten. The bridge was burned apart. It took them weeks to have it repaired, so basically our aim, what we wanted, is disrupt German communication and disrupt the going on that they had to bring more forces and use people. So, per se, what we showed the Soviet Union was answered in all ways the way we were doing it. However, this time it was no longer a local job, but was a command coming all the way -- who know, maybe it came even from Moscow. I am not equipped to tell you exactly.

Q: A couple of questions for clarification. Can you guess at how many partisans would have been involved in this operation?

A: I guesstimate that at least it was between 800 to 1,000 partisans. At least, because to cover just basically the area even in a thin kind of a way from all command posts. We're talking a perimeter of battle that at times lasted for about maybe 10, 15 miles. In other words, they were fighting in one area near the bridge. Then around Cozlo-Chechnya (ph), which it was a small, little town, but it was quite a garrison established over there. So again, we showed the biggest amount of power as it was previously ever displayed because on direction, we didn't use that much of a force. Ruda Slaska, we didn't use that much of a force.

Q: So that means these 1,000 or whatever number partisans maybe were broken into companies of a hundred . . .

A: Correct, correct.

Q: Okay. And there were men and women fighting?

A: Were men and women, yes.

Q: And . . .

A: It stands out to me, one -- Rachel was her name -- and she was with Fania (ph) Kommunarsk. I mentioned the name to him before. Rumor had it she was his girlfriend, and to look at that young lady dressed with a uniform on that horse, it was not so common to our

era, you know what I mean, to see a young lady in uniform and horseback riding and be participating in battle. So a lot of these here things became more obvious at this time, that the fighting by young ladies were justified, you know what I mean, and so on. And they were renowned about it, we knew it. We saw it.

Q: Were the women treated differently than the men, than the partisans . . .

A: Well, they were always a female. That still went on, and in any army, you can understand. A female had her priorities. Of course, the commander when he wanted a girl, she was his girl. You know what I mean? So call it what you want to, but the feminine wish or ways, or whatever it is, was very much visible at a particular time. Even when she was riding on a horse. Even though that she was, you know, a good fighter and so on, it still was, on the other hand, that intuition of her feminine.

Q: Were women given as much responsibility or different kinds of responsibilities?

A: Well, to answer you did we have a commander woman, no. So, obviously, you can understand to judge from here that it was still a man's world and not a woman's world, or equal world. No. However, it was -- in the Russian Army to see women, it was no novelty. We already seen it from '39 when the Soviets came to us. So it was perhaps different than we saw it from the Polish Army from before, but women were in the Soviet Army as an equality marker. So that part talking from a Soviet point of view, if you want to say, it was no novelty. But in the partisans, yes, it was a novelty to see because if I was going to percentage-wise in any company, if they could have been one percent, it was already a big marker. You could find, for instance, in our company there maybe were seven or eight women, and, like I say, the most of them were in the kitchen. Which, you know, where is a woman's place? As sort of saying, it's in the kitchen. And they were utilized in the kitchen. Yes. Or in a, let's say, as nursing, for instance, in the hospital. So it was as the past was for placing the women in this kind of a ways. You know what I mean, yes.

Q: But there were women who were on the front lines fighting?

A: Yes. In the Soviet regular army. But with the partisans, depending on the occasion and where.

Q: Well, there's one other thing that confuses me a little bit. When you talk about going into a garrison and you use the word, "police," are you talking about local recruits or Germans?

A: Police, whenever we speak, we never referred to Germans. That was local. So being that they used to be called by the Russian name of militia or the German police were organized -- the head of the police was a German. Or there were a few much, which it was jobs for the Germans who maybe were either injured or deserved the rank. That they were not going to the front lines, so from the front lines, from the hospitals, they were given sort of something better.

Q: Change tape.

A: But with or without _____, it was contribution made by the local companies to supply people to join these paratroopers right now on that special mission. I was picked to be one basically because I spoke fluent Polish. Secondly, because I hailed from that area from Poland, and with me was another young man. He was a Nordic, blonde hair, and could be easily masqueraded as a non-Jew, which it happened as we shall tell later. That I was sort of in a way almost discovered that I am not what I am supposed to have been because I couldn't hide my face and makeup, we didn't use at the time. So the other boy's name which also was Jewish and he was from my platoon was Polotchik (ph), that's what his name was. And we had local area people join us. One guy who was a graduator of Polish officers' school, Surgay (ph), Surgay Balli (ph). That was his name, he was sort of Polish and white and Russian mixed in him, so either way you would call him Polish would be correct. Russian would be again correct. And, of course, he was fluent in his Polish, and here I'm going to make a point. They asked if anybody has pictures from the past to be a sort of identification to show when we meet up with this here AK underground or Polish underground, that's sort of to prove that we are authentic. So he had a picture in uniform as an officer cadet, and that was while graduating his officers' school. Which in other times, that would give him -- in London, and is a ticket to be arrested and sent to Siberia. And this time, it served the purpose very well, and he could show it off. So we were four of us from the locals, Surgay (ph) and another guy who was a Polish-speaking white Russian, and I and then it was Polotchik (ph). So the rest eight of them, including the commander of our group, were all easterners, as we call them or referred to them, or paratroopers that were dropped. And they are disguised to say that they joined the Polish Army in protest against the Communists and, therefore, they're willing to give their life to fight with the Polish for the cause, that they are anti-Communist. So it sort of was a supportive kind of thing, and every one of us was made up like the documents, so it was really produced like in legal kind of a manner and way. And once we crossed the Niemen, we started to go on the other side and we made our way up south, sort of that we knew in certain areas that there were more white Poles that were operating by night as partisans. By day, they were doing their regular work be as farmers, or whatever their work took. And from talking and inquiries, we found out to make the contact to somebody, and we all, therefore, did not go in. But it was just Surgay -- per se, it used to be Surgay and the commander or two would go in from the easterners, or rather the paratroopers. And I or _____ would be in there because it's supportive evidence to carry on a good conversation in Polish. The Russian at the time would keep quiet because he did not speak Polish. So this is the way our contact was made and the groundwork was laid. They took it for all the scripture that we told them that we are coming from around Warsaw and we are trying to establish here a Polish partisan. In other words, that we will be able to help create because, you know, since there are surrogate partisans so we want to be on our side and do our work. And we used to be led from one pool to the other. Transportation was provided by us, horses -- it was horseback riding. And at times, it did entail about a whole night riding on a horseback, just having something covered on the horses. Did not have no saddles or anything like this here, so it was -- when you got off that horse, you walked

around like in a barrel. You couldn't stretch out, and that was part of it. In our weapons we had at that time we had some automatic and the majority was end-shooters, automatic pistols and so on. So we didn't show a lot of weapons we'd ask for, for whatever reason it was. And on one of these here occasions, it must have been maybe the third day and we used to were trained and told that whenever you entered a Polish house, you're going to have to cross heart, you have to kneel to say your prayers. You had show the whole rigmarole that it looks like authentic, and you cannot go away. And this is what it was, the Polish system and the Polish star, and all of us including myself as much as it hurt me to say some of those words. But for lifesaving idea, you do a lot of things that you ask forgiveness, you know, in your heart. But you do it in order to survive and I did it. Again, it was the food eating kind, it's they were serving pork and more pork. And to us, it was a novelty of having this food served because it was not like that. They went their normal way. And drinking, of course, rum. One of these nights we then first had to say our prayer. We sat behind the table, drinking had started with moonshine and Polish Vodka, you know, that some of it was shown to us. And the host which was sitting across like from me at a table, and he says in Polish, " _____," which it means, "You know what? To me, it looks like he's a Jew." I controlled my emotion not to turn colors and quick, Surgay _____, as I said Surgay, what you call it, picked up this conversation and says, "You know, it's funny you should say it," he says to him, "because he's a Georgian." And the makeup of the Georgian people, which Stalin was one of the Georgian, would be of the dark skin. And a lot of them could be taken, you would take for -- they liked the long sideburns which I did wear long sideburns sometimes. If I would have, it would have been an appropriate image to portray that that's what it was. But here was a fast-acting period that took place, and he took over and I did not want to get in involved with talking. Basically, trembling inside as to what it is, so it went away smooth and the evening was ended. However, when our evening had ended and Polotchik, my other guy, was on patrol, because every time we entered a house there two guys on the outside on patrol watching because no matter how safe they told us to feel, we never knew this surprise that it might ensue or might happen. So afterwards when we get together, I says look, this and this happened. And I believe you ought to know about it, and that's why I'm telling you. I don't tell you from this moment on, neither I will not enter a house at all. However, you must be with me for our own safety, because if we become a danger to our mission, what we're about to do, remember they'll kill us both. So there will be nobody to say that it was wrong. So accidents do happen, you know what I mean, and that could be that. So it was honestly an awakening and vice-versa because now on, it was guard each other. The reason I'm telling you that that this is how anti-Semitism was penetrating, as I mentioned a few times before, that in your own, no matter how safe you wanted to feel, you did not have that safety feeling that you do not have to watch. Because we know from experience of how many Jews were killed, which how do you describe it, that it was not an accident? You have to have the proof to prove it, and there was no one to question this.

Q: But you were talking about with . . .

A: Polotchik.

Q: . . . Polish. That's different than within your group.

A: Yes, but I was talking to him one-on-one at this particular time, and he understood it and he joined with me. And from there on until the end of that mission ended, which we were traveling around and we were already nearing the area in the forest near Grodno. But the fact remains that while our command suspected that the Polish partisans and the National Polish partisans where a resistance became very understandable to us, and they are visible. And they had an easier way of operating because they did not have -- you know, the Germans did not know who, what and where. For as long as the population didn't tell about you, bring you up, you were operating safe. So they could be where they are, do what they want to, and manage to stay away, not to be -- maybe there are people Poland in the militia. It could be possible, I don't -- I don't doubt that a bit, but since I don't know the facts exactly, I don't wish to dwell on it too much. Until finally our mission ended, it was about 10 days.

Q: Let's stop for a second. (noise)

A: As easily I talk about it after that, that it ensued and happened at that time, I hope you get my understanding. That every minute of the day was a hard minute to pass because we were really watching ourselves against two enemies. You never know did the Polish really take us for granted or didn't they? And again, let's not forget the Germans.

Q: It doesn't sound like it's getting quieter.

A: The 10 days of agony really is not worthy enough a word to use as I said describing our ordeal what we had go through. Being dressed in a Polish uniform, acting something that we are not, and all that rigmarole going through with it, prayers. Not I nor the Gentiles in our group were praying type of people in those days at all. Especially being from the Soviet side. So all this here was -- I don't know to say what it was the worst part of it. But one thing which I did not say it, and I want to tell it. I disclosed the situation to the commander of our group. In another word way, I spoke to Polotchik. I says, "You know," I didn't want to use because of it, "I don't mind it to stay outside any time that we go into a house or anything like this here. In other words, to be on patrol." And that was a well-taken word because this is the worst you can ask for, to be on patrol. In case of trouble, you're the first one to die. So they didn't mind it, and especially these guys inside, it will be a drink and so on. And I did not mind it at all to forsake it. And our mission, as Polish partisans, was nearing and we politely took our uniforms off, burned them so there should be no recognition or anything like that whatsoever. And now, we ensued to find a new place, to find is there any partisans at all in the area. We ran up on a place in the forest, what they called it _____, which it means "The Holy Mud" place which it was, it was almost. And while going through this forest and speaking to a Polish person from the area, he was the one speaking that telling us as a farmer that there are partisans in that area. And what we ran up against was a family camp, but they, as a matter of fact, explained us that regular partisans as many times as they started to act over here, but in a short time later, they sort of get lost, and they don't know the outcome. Be that they got killed, be that they moved to other forests, or whatever it is. But

seeing they were using that as a hiding place, they were very cautious and careful to have us come in over there. We needed a guide at that particular time to know the area, and we found two of the Jewish people over there who knew the area exactly well. And they did not mind to become our guides and be with us for the period that we were. Our mission was at that time, once we turned back in as Soviet partisans, to show the Germans that there are partisans over here. And how could we show it to the Germans or see what kind of reaction comes from them? We went downing a telephone in a few places that we had to cut on the posts, just cut the wires and so on. And at one time, we used a new system that we tried. We had already the plastic explosives where we would take and wrap it around so no longer did we have to use a saw to cut it down. But we would wrap around this here and put in a capsule, and from distance turn on -- from distance, turn it on and by one shot, the whole post, the telephone post, would blow up in the air. And devise to make it was disrupted, so to us, it was sort of like a fiasco, something we never experienced before in an action. And that's why it was progress that we have seen in a different way of doing those things. Because you could set it off very easily, in a few minutes. Just to wrap around, around the tree, you know, with a piece the explosive and blow up, in other words, a telephone like this here. So that was our mission at that time and we did accomplish. We also had a train to go by rails that we where to explode some rail, train about it to do. So that was the three things that we were involved in doing: Cutting down the telephone poles, disrupting communication, also burned down a bridge which it was a connecting small bridge in a side road and -- which it was leading to a city. And also, blow up some rail, which it was -- when I think about blowing up the rail, when I think about it, I still shudder. Because we came to that mission, and we really the night before did a lot of drinking. And while the drinking didn't bother me in most cases, at this time -- but all of a sudden, while they used at that particular time, they used to call it a shuntle. This was the rod to clean out your rifles with, and we had to put it in that fender ring so that would serve for the right train, and the train would go by as to be able to go ahead to touch it and make an explosion.

Q: Let's stop here a second. Don't move. Do you remember where we were?

A: Yes. As I started to tell you, with my long coat, we were wearing army coats, which they were long coats at that time. We really dressed back -- dressed back in army uniforms of the Russian Army, so this sort of did not have them with us, but we got them. And I'll tell you when. How they got them, I don't even know to tell you. But we got them and we were changed over as Russian soldiers. Not fully, but almost. And all of a sudden, I saw that I attached the piece of steel or rather wire, that it was in between that ring which that was the one to trigger it for an explosion. I saw it there, and I don't know -- I didn't know what to say. Should we run or whatever we should do, some kind of a motion, because -- and calmly we went away. Looks like all the other Jew, there were three of us over there. The other two had seen it at the same time, and we retreated and we went away. Now, we did it like we used to before in other places. We retreated about maybe a half a mile away into the forest, and we were waiting for a passing train. Whenever, we did not have a schedule, and the trains in those years did not run on schedule either. Because military trains had priority and the other priority, which I know it now and I did not know it then, was trains carrying Jews to the

camps. They were the priority number one almost like the army trains at that particular time. So -- and we heard a train in about an hour later, and we were just retreating waiting because we wanted to know the damage. On the other hand, we couldn't even find out where the damage was. So we heard an explosion, so we scored our three-way things that we had. We had a bridge blown up, we did that. We had the train which we had accomplished that. The damage what it was, we did not even wait, we retreated from there immediately upon the explosion towards the forest because we were not too well familiar with the area. But we had a map of the local area that we obtained, and military map which we knew whereabouts we have to aim because we did not accept to go ahead to ask people our ways around, because we couldn't trust anybody. So all in all, we found out that we knew about this group of people who were in hiding which was like a family camp. Special partisans, we didn't make contact with any of them. And we started through a different route now to go back to our bases on the other side of the Niemen. We decided at this time to go in our way without horseback riding as we were going this way, so we knew it's going to be a long haul to it. And it took us -- well, it took us 10 days to go to the mission, we didn't see it. It took us two weeks until we finally came to the Niemen River near our area, and we had to get somebody with a little boat and a gun that we met, a farmer. We had a little boat that he had, a canoe more or less, to get us across on the other side. Seeing that there were 12, it was impossible for all of us to go in. So we spread out like a few guy with machine guns around both sides in case of attack, and once we landed on the other side, we were doing -- the same group was doing for the others. To take cover until we were all on the other side. There we were on our own terms, we knew our ways around, and we finally came to our place where camp was set before. And our camp was still there because we were prepared that, who know, maybe we did not have no telephones or any communications to know what animals. But it so happened that everything was in place _____. And of course, our commander did his reporting and we were returning at this time back to our former group. A new group was formed and we were in it. This was the time really that I was named commandeer before commander -- platoon commander before that mission. But now I was assigned a platoon, and I was commanding that, and we were right now working, not with the former group of partisans. But we were working right now with the paratroopers. And a new mission had started to ensue which it was taking -- it took us a few months to get all the equipment together. Like rubber boats were thrown down to us. Not boats, but, you know, the ones that are blown in the air and you can go which the army was using. And we prepared a new mission to be established which it looked almost like a front line break-through. Do you have this on the tape? How far?

Videographer: We're at 24 minutes.

A: The new mission to be was a break-through. But right now, it was a unified command to that new mission. It was the command from General Castankovich (ph) that was leading it, but our general staff was also involved. And there was more than 1,200 partisans got together near the Niemen River, and at this time we were not looking or worried about who will disrupt us. For the first time as we used to do our missions at night, this mission was done in broad daylight. And as we came and we started on the Niemen to set up this here little

pontoon, sort of like. And our five guys to go through across, and it was set up right away alongside that perimeter at that time to be ready for attack. All we were wondering where the police or where are the Polish partisans we already knew were in that area. The amount of so much armor that we had and the amount of so many people all gathered at one time on both sides of the Niemen River as it happened, because we went through. It would have taken us too long to get through all of it in one spot, so in various perimeters, we used so many people to get across the other side of the Niemen.

Q: Where -- can you name a town that's in this area . . .

A: Okay. We were crossing at this particular time, I with my group at that time were crossing near the City Lida. And Lida is very -- I would say, kilometer-wise at that particular time, it must have been maybe 30 or 40 kilometers, no more, to Lida that the crossing was taking place. And as we came on the other side, we were given horses and wagons, which they were confiscated from farmers and we were going just like a regular army would go. Some of them, we would be walking, but when we were walking, we were not marching scattered out. We were walking in a four across, but it was not next to each other. We were walking so much between each other that if we had to drop, take a position military style, that we were able to do that.

Q: Why was it decided to do this in broad daylight?

A: They wanted to show a big force. While previous times they did not want to show -- you go a group of 12, a group of 20, the biggest missions in the partisans were achieved with small groups unless an attack on a garrison. So right now they wanted -- you know, people exaggerate. When they see 1,200, I'm sure that the word got around that it was probably a force of 2,000 to maybe 3,000. It's a usual way people repeat something like that, it looks bigger. And the command by all price, wanted at that particular time to show a big force. And we were going and we were not stopped or disrupted in any way while we were going at that time through forests. We didn't go through -- but the newest we had guys on horses to spot in settlements, to find out the reaction, what people are talking about it. And they were filling us in that the militia was fleeing small garrisons or small militia places, because to them it looked like a breakthrough from the front line, and it looks like they landed over here. In Bialystok, at that particular time -- Bialystok is a big city and it was maybe 120, 150 kilometers away. They were on ready massed two full divisions equipped to go to the front lines, and they took these few divisions and threw it at us. So we did not even have enough time to get situated in the area. Which it was on day three, all of a sudden, airplanes above and what the airplanes did, the bombs -- was gasoline bombs. So the forest became on fire. Something that it was never done before. (A) The Germans never bombed the forest with airplanes; second, with this type of gasoline bombs. So these gasoline bombs made so much panic that we did not know -- it didn't matter whether on a compass or the map, which way you're going. Because you went to the right, you see more forests on fire. And with all of this here, by the time that day was over, we were an army demolished in a way. Not from killing, but in small groups. And any of the light armaments like we had the light artillery pieces

were all left and mined and a new retreat back started in a new fashion in small groups.

End of tape #1

Tape #2

Q: When did this take place?

A: This I remember quite well because it was in December because coming back we know the ice on the Niemen River, there were floating pieces of ice. And I know the time because Christmastime is a visible part, that I remember because it was a big, important thing to remember. But a big disaster happened to us at that time. I do not want to omit a very important story personally that I ensued on that day before the total retreat had started. I was laid out with my platoon in front line. And when I say, "platoon," I'm talking about 20-something guys. And all we had was two live machine guns. The one on the tripod with a round base was one of them. And the other one was a similar one. In other words, we had 10 shooter rifles. All of a sudden, we heard the roar of tanks. So the roar of tanks, all of that had happened before the airplanes showed up on the scene. I jumped a little bit the gun before. When I heard the roar of tanks, I sent one of my guys to tell to the commander of his that it's noticeable, the tanks, and what have I got -- what kind of change of command, let's say, new position. Because I told him I don't even have in my platoon one entire armored gun to shoot them. So what with rifles, how am I going to shoot against them? And as they became closer, I decided to retreat on my own way without a command, and I went to the commander and told him, I says, "Look, there is infantry walking alongside the tanks, and there is at least visible from distance, I had someone climb up on a tree, and they saw at least six tanks. " Because how far can you see, you know what I mean without field glasses or so on. So I says, "I know you probably did not have a chance so I retreated." He says, "How dare you to retreat; we didn't tell you." I says, "Do you think we're going to be able fight against this force? With this, you don't have a chance." It didn't take another minute or two while we were talking, a guy running come in and says, "We are all ordered not to open fire, but we'll retreat. We'll retreat in a position like we came to the force away from where we were laid up alongside that road." And as soon nightfall came, my commander brought me into the high command to stand trail. I almost thought I am going to be shot. How dare was I to take and retreat my platoon on my own? My thing was since I had no ammunition, which it was a fact, to even attack a tank, why was I to disclose our position? We would wind up we would have suffered a lot of casualties. It looks like command saw my plea much better than my immediate commander from the company, and was case dismissed. But I was afraid that that was curtains for me at that particular time because I did it on my own. As it turned out to be later, I was allowed, of course, that I made a good decision by retreating my platoon to them. Seeing that the command would have come to me anyhow a few minutes later. So then after the airplanes showed on the scene, which it was closer to the afternoon already, and so far they did not start shooting directly. But all of a sudden, it burst out cannon shooting, which probably it was from the tanks approaching. Although we, by that time, were retreated from the area because that looked like the whole forest was going along the main road and the main road going, I mean, going through the forest. Not a regular road to outside. And the roads in the forest were dirt roads as we can best way express it. But their tanks, you see, could go through these roads. And wherever they stepped on trees, they stepped on trees. They made their own roads out. That night the command told us that we are not going to

ensue fighting. We are going to retreat back to our base. We do not want to go in groups of more than 10 because groups more than 10 will require too much exposure. And we were to march only by night, and if anyone is caught or whatever it is, it's -- you know what I mean, you're just running. Cannot tell them our mission or anything like that. However, we were all asked that each one of us carry at this time more ammunition. So each of them were loaded up with more ammunition on ourselves. We walked and we came there, all right? And only thing was in favor was that it wasn't snowing at that time. It was just cold, but it wasn't snowing. And food became a problem because as we went through the forest, we found blueberries or anything, we couldn't go ahead to have the luxury to stop at farmers until finally a few days later and closer to our areas, that's when we began to go eat. When we came near the Niemen, and our group to go across which it was -- I was 10 men or 12. I believe it was about 12 men with me. And there was another group divided for not so many. Each that we were walking away from each other, but not too far a distance that we couldn't contact with each other. In case a fight ensues, that we could depend on the other one to help us. Either flank them or they would flank us. And when we came to the Niemen, we heard shots coming from all sides which later on, we discovered it was our own guys who were patrolling that area of the edge of the forest near the Niemen that they did not know what's going on. And they thought sort of maybe the Poles, the AK, are trying to come on this side. Because they didn't look like an army, and, therefore, they fired the shots. A few casualties were done, nothing is done to my platoon but some of the others. And the order was we grabbed horses at that time from farmers, and anybody who was carrying a machine gun was allowed to sit on a horse. Alongside the horse, some other guys were swimming along, because pieces of ice were floating on that river. And by the time I came over on the other side of the Niemen, I managed one thing to do, not to stop. It became so the whole uniform that I was dressed in, I became like a walking mountain of ice. But I was aware of myself, I kept sort of seeing that I'm alive and keep walking as well as I could until finally reached the first farmhouse. When I came into the first farmhouse, I found plenty more partisans who did probably like myself. The woman of the house availed herself tremendously, and in that area people used to have ovens which served them in their houses. That oven was cooking, for baking as well as for heat. And on top, there was a place even to climb up and to sleep there. And since I had to get undressed, she gave me a change of something and put my clothing to dry out. There was moonshine there to drink, so we had a good drink. And on top of that stove, I climbed on. I fell asleep, needless to say, and by later on by morning -- that was the wooded area, so we didn't worry about because we knew it was clear because it was clear as far as Germans were concerned, the police. And we started to make our way back to camp, where it was. So that was from a happy occasion as we marched as soldiers and brave guys to make it believe that it was a breakthrough, all of a sudden, for Christmas it was our dire moment that we did not succeed. However, command did not stop with their idea. What they did at this time instead of sending a big group and an army like they did, we were moving in the same amount of people while we were retreating. In small groups, no bigger companies than 20 people at one time were ordered where in a direction to meet in the forests around Grodno. And within, I would say, maybe two weeks to three weeks, we had a brand new force organized in the forests over there. The front line -- by that time, I'm talking about in January of 1944 -- the front lines began to become visible. That the Byelorussian, that they

were almost at the beginning in January of '44, that the army were entering in certain spots in the Ukraine and in the forest. And we did not realize that within six, seven months, the army will be here. We thought all along that maybe once the army becomes near, we would sort of be discharged. But that was not Russia's idea or the Soviets saying -- we were at that particular time pushed to go closer to Grodno. They had already their assignment. I remember vividly that the night before when I went to place a mine on the road -- at that particular time we used a lot mines. We, you know, even used mines to put on the road because the retreating soldiers by the Soviet Army, we did not think that the Red Army is close by. And I believe that that blowup of that mine, that it exploded on a truck that we found out the next day was already that the Red Army is reaching. I jumped right now -- at least about eight, nine months. In the area where my wife was and the area from originally I was with the partisans, they came out of the forests about July, early August. I, as I said, still we were involved with all of this here things, did not get discharged out of that until sometime in September. And a new mission was awaiting for me to get started because immediately it was for 10 days that we were -- that the army was fighting the battle. On one side, the Soviets. And the other side, the Germans. A lot of Germans were left behind for purposes. They had the high churches as usual in the north. And on top of these churches, they found them -- they placed themselves with glasses and they were able to tell the other side where the artillery is located to how we are to load firing. And their accuracy was beyond belief. On the third round, they knocked the battery out. To the right, to the left, the turbine was in the center and your battery is all to pieces like _____.

Q: I'm getting a little confused.

A: You're get confused?

Q: I'm getting confused about -- because you started jumping around a bit, saying that your wife was -- at a certain time you were -- tell me where all of you are again.

A: We are right now at a new area of the forest from where we started with the paratroopers.

Q: In the winter of '44?

A: In the winter of -- we are talking in January, February of '44. And I said God only would have known that about six, seven months later the Red Army would already come in.

Q: Let me ask you a question.

A: Go right ahead.

Q: Well, this is six months later or whatever, the Red Army did come in. In those days, can you -- if you think back, did six months seem like an eternity, or did it . . .

A: Six months, definitely an eternity. There is no ifs about it. Every day was long, but the closer

the front lines became reaching, the closer we used to see Soviet airplanes in the air flying through because we used to begin to see them now flying through our missions to bomb or so on. It sort of put in a new hole in life. It was still being possible to believe that really the front lines are coming closer to us and the Soviets are returning. It was only like everybody had one prayer, that we would live to see that. Because a new way had started in all this force over there. While we were a way closer to Grodno, as I said, in small groups that we were asked to come to this end. We must have had a force of about 800 partisans over there in various places. The old territory from where we descended sort of from, right now began to fill up with retreating Germans. And the partisans had suffered more casualties in this here last month of the war as they did in two and a half years prior to that. Because first of all, the army was afraid to retreat by the regular open road, so they used the forest. When they were going through the forest, there was no holy places for them as special by any army. And they had their equipment, and, of course, the partisans could not help it. If they ensued in a little fight, the Germans did not stop with a fight because to them regrouping and retreating was more important. So maybe a fight would ensue, they would look the opening where they could do the best and get out. So that gave the partisans sort of another way of running away. But there was nowhere to hide and nowhere to run to escape. And the biggest amount, my best friends that I was to through the years were killed in the last -- in these here ensuing battles of that time. I came out -- as a matter of fact, not to jump it. When the Red Army neared our places, one of the companies -- when the commander came, I was assigned at that time to be in the other staff. And he came to telling the staff that the Red Army came and took away his men. They need to refuse, where he in all kind of language stated to me, "Who is your commander? Am I your commander? Am I the staff, or the guy in the Red Army? What right did you have?" And he used them -- all the language to them, "I don't care how you get your men back. If they have to desert, let them desert. I want you to go and get your men back." To his dismay, he couldn't keep up -- find his men. And this is a whole chaos at that time existed, and until we finally came out on the outside after the 10 days' battle that had ensued around the Niemen until the Russians break through. And after the encirclement, like I said, you see, we were asked to come outside. What the partisans at that particular time were asked to do was to keep going over on the streets and keep a vigil on the streets. At that particular time we weren't -- did not have yet the order. As soon we found Germans hiding or anything and they surrendered, we didn't obey by the law. We would take them out in the field and kill them. Of course, and take the ammunition away from them. So no sooner, a few days all of that went on, there was an order issued that the partisans are no longer to kill the Germans who are surrendering, because it's against the law. It was bring them -- and a camp was started with POWs. It was sort of a defeating purpose to us, that command, but we had to obey the order. And immediately the Soviets started to -- at that particular time, they were probably in the front levels maybe two, three days. But they already had the administration mapped out to what offices each building would be located. And before long, they started taking to service the local population. The population was ordered that anybody between the ages of 21 to 55 is to register in an induction center to go back into service. The local population, which I'm speaking of at that place in Grodno, were Polish. That was not a part of Byelorussia, that was part of Poland. And that's the last thing that was on their mind is to be going, riding out to be taken to go do soldiering for the Soviet Union. The hate still was

imbedded in them, so it was embedded all the way, you couldn't help it. So my new assignment was that I had to form a new platoon because a lot of them already went out in the open and got jobs as accountants or whatever it is in the civilian life, and they were discharged from this staff, which it was also in one of the buildings inside Grodno. For my luck, I did it. Firstly, I had a big dilemma with myself. I could not face the outside. To me, the outside was atrocious. It was fearful. And second of all, I was afraid once I go out, they're taking away my gun. To me, the gun was my life; it was my protection. It was everything I wanted, that's how I was. So one of the guys would come to me that he was a _____, too. He was an accountant by trade. And he says, "Herr, what is the matter with you?" It was hard for me to describe -- _____ was his name. He wrote a book in Yiddish. To the best of knowledge, it was never translated. He wrote about me. The book in Yiddish title is "The Participation of the Jews in the Soviet Underground." And he generalized that in telling. He didn't stop on particular issues, but he generalized it to tell about the whole scope and all the various partisans that existed and to prove the Jews were participating in it. So he came out, it makes sense, he was an accountant. He says, "Herr, I understand you're going to come out, too. Why don't you go and get a job?" I went to my commander at that particular time after that, and he says to me, "Where do you think I'm going to send you? I'm going to send you to the militia to go for a job? You stay here. I'll tell you when you're going to be discharged." And I remained there. The next day we had a call from a colonel, a local colonel, who needed soldiers. He did not have enough of the regular army. Whenever they didn't have enough soldiers, they turned to the partisans at this particular time to go ahead and supply. So I got an order to send somebody for patrol to watch that colonel. I literally sent them 10 men, and every man that I sent came back. No, it was a general, excuse me. That the general would not accept them as to be. And all they had to do is patrol the house. I became flabbergasted until I decided that I'm going to be the one and with the permission of my commander, he allowed me, that I'm going to go on duty and serve it. I came in in a military form, saluted to him, told him my rank, what I am. He was Jewish, a Semite. And after, he says to me, "Sit down." I sat down, and the biggest thing what had happened to me that I did not expect to hear a Soviet General to say shalom. He said some Jewish. He says, "Who did you send me? What kind of soldiers?" I said, "They're not soldiers. They were partisans. They were not trained soldiers. They were not inducted in the army." And they were -- so they came and told him when they came on duty, he gave them up-and-down look. "Hey, come on. I don't need no farmer here." So he says, "You see, you came like a soldier. You saluted, you told your rank. I take you like a regular man in the army." So I told him, "I'm the platoon commander. My platoon is no longer because it was diversified to other things. And since you rejected 10 men, I had no alternative, so with the permission of my commander, I came." "Sit down, have a drink." You know, Russian style. You know, like tea in England. That's how Russians were, that you have a drink that you show your hospitality and you show your closeness. I was afraid even to ask him too many questions, but since he himself used that word, "shalom," I took it for granted that he's open and he says, "Don't worry about it. I'll get somebody else for patrol. You're my concern." Because it's the first time that I met somebody who wanted to hear what happened. He didn't let me stay on duty, he asked me to stay there with him. And I stayed there for two days, and afterwards, I was called because I was to take my platoon and join the induction center

because we had to bring the inductees about 60, 70 miles away to another city which it's called Monastyrok. Because the railroads were totally disrupted; the railroad did not go any further than Monastyrok. And so we mustered and within a few days a nice few thousand, maybe over 5, 6,000 and we put them in rows. We had to march to get them out from the induction center with bayonets. And the women and children and everybody was like a demonstration. They're crying over why their men are taken from them and so on. And some of them tried to pay off. I knew from the grapevine that one of my platoon guys, because he later came and asked me. And I told him that "If you talk to me again about bribe, I'm going to have you arrested." So I don't want to hear about and I don't know -- so he understood that I don't want to be involved, but I wouldn't to hear. He was a Jewish boy from my platoon, and I sort of see and don't see, you know, and don't know. But whatever he wanted to do, he went. And a lot of them what they did, they would write on a piece of paper that you have this list. That period was mostly that you show up in Grodno, they'll take him, but they wouldn't induct him again. So what he did, in the meanwhile, they got someone that will give you watches; someone will give you gold pieces and so on. I did not want to be a party to all of that, as I aforementioned. We loaded them into trains, and we went as far the old border of the Soviet/Polish border. Over there, the military KGB took over and I was given papers to go back. I would say this would finalize this part of the chapter, and after that we're going have to talk about the liberation and what had happened in the field.

Q: How much is left on this tape?

Videographer: How much time we have. 25 minutes.

A: 25 minutes? Okay. For me again, a human life had started with papers from the Soviet government written in it that every place I show up with my platoon, no matter how many I have, the head of this location of settlement is to provide me with my men, food, and shelter and a place to sleep. The trains at that particular time were all the military. It was a high court to get you something, a passenger train. So we didn't care, whatever we could get on on a train, for my whole platoon I remained with one Gentile boy. Because I couldn't get hold him under any other circumstances, who was with me and I knew the farm place from where he came from that he had a mother and sister. And many times in the partisan life before I joined the paratroopers, we would stop off to his house and everything like that. So he was the only one, Nathan, the guy that I told you was his name who was the bad guy who was taking bribes, he, of course, realized the way I am. So he wanted to lose me faster than I could go, I had to be lost. So we went in different directions, and we finally ended up on a military train on the way to Baranovichi. From Baranovichi, if we get, we're going to work our way down further to go to his farm or back to direction to see why we can wind up over there. In the meanwhile while we are in that military train, I already in between time stopped off in Minsk because I knew already that I was curious for me to see what's Minsk. And Minsk was already liberated months and months before. And I found out through the partisans that our main staff that was located in Grodno no longer is in Grodno, but it's right now in Minsk located. I went there to be registered and to get my validated things. And I had to make another trip afterwards. The first thing I got up there was two medals that they gave

me. One medal is for being a partisan, and the other medal was that I received at the time for being a heroic partisan. So all of sudden, when I was on this train with Walodia (ph) together, I had the two medals. He didn't get no medals or anything like that. He only got the partisan validation, it looked like a medal that everyone was given in Minsk. So when we got on the train and that was a military train, within hours a guy comes over and I could recognize by his hat, that this color hats and so on belong to the NKVD, we used to call it at that time, which later turned to be KGB in due time later. He got involved in conversation and he asked me for documents. So I showed him the documents, firstly, these were given to me by the KGB when I was released from my platoon to go back. And the other documents that I already had on me for the medals was that I was a partisan, and he found very interesting to ask me. He says, "I want to stay with you. You're going to fill me in and tell me what took place in the partisans." Because to him was a total new story that he heard about it that Stalin used to rob and _____, but he never heard or known what activities and what had went on. So "Where are you going?" he asked me. And I tried to say here, Walodia (ph) here has a mother because he was from the _____ and a sister, and I at the same time want to go back to that direction to see maybe somebody survived that I know from the partisans to me. And then I'm going to go to look for work. He says, "You don't have to look for work. I'm going to take you to work." Then he told me that he's a lieutenant and probably going to get the rank of captain, and he's going to Baranovichi, which he will be inducting people for work in the KGB. I realized that the KGB man will never say no more other things like that which at this particular time, I let him talk to me and I accepted it. And we were friends on the train until we got to Baranovichi, the whole period, too. And that's how another phase of my life had started. So that lieutenant did not let his eyes off of me and my partner, and we finally descended in Baranovichi. And he made sure that I come with him and register in the employment agency where he turned me into a captain in charge of that. To Walodia, my friend, he says, "The militia is right nearby. Let him go back there, and he gave him his name if any questions." And he registered there for a job and he'll be there.

Q: When you use -- I'm sorry to interrupt you, but when you use the term, "militia," you're always referring to the local soldiers?

A: No, the local police. In Russia in the Soviet Russia, there was no such thing as police. It was always militia. The militia was, you know what I mean, when we use saying the voluntary. That was not voluntary, but that was a police force. Take the police department in any city, and I refer militia; that's what I mean.

Q: Okay, you're talking about the local police when you say militia?

A: Correct.

Q: Okay. Just want to be correct.

A: Yeah. All right. So Walodia registered there, and we made out with him that after registration we both want to take a two weeks' vacation, sort of to speak, so he can go to his

farm. Because actually it was harvest time at that time, we're talking about September at the time. The biggest harvest time in that area which his mother having a small farm, would have needed a hand. There wasn't enough. So it was a good reason that they didn't mind that. And they let me go with him because I was going as sort of a farm hand to help him on his farm. And at the same time, I just said I'll go. So we got a date within two weeks to meet up back, I and the officer of the KGB. And he and the office of the local police or militia, as they were called. And while I went -- I already arrived now, they issued me new papers because in the Soviet Union you did not travel anyplace without having the justified papers. And the justified papers weren't meaning a permit. You see, at a time later on we had to get passports because you always had to have your ID with you. But at the time, they gave me and Walodia papers that we can go to the area. You had to specify where you're going, who you're going to see, what you're going do about it. And papers in hand, we had already on the train free passage. No nothing like this here to go back to his farm in his little -- which it was located not to far from Russia. It was in a way sort of a happy journey for the first time for him. The more I get freer and the more my eyes were seeing the free world, the more I became sort of shaken up. I could not take freedom. You did not have a psychiatrist at that time or a doctor to go to for help to help you overcome. You just had to work it out. When I came to his house, his mother gave him a changeover and she gave me a changeover. I was treated like part of the family, which at that particular time was again a novelty item for a Jew. A novelty item for survival from stuff like this here. So we, of course, we had dinner and a few drinks, and afterwards, the two of us went out in the little -- it was a farm settlement, maybe I would say, maybe 60 to 80 families. And they all had farms, small farms, around there, and there with a harmonica, you know what I mean, dancing and drinking, which it was all a celebration. After all, they got a hero back, Walodia, which he grew up in this here. And I, being the former commander of Walodia, which I used to come as a partisan with Walodia a lot of times, so I knew enough people in his settlement more than just his mother and so son. We had another guy with us.

Q: I don't know what this noise is.

A: Some of these little things that I forgot myself to take and put it in a drawer and so on. Yes, there was also a few more guys who were in our brigade serving as partisans from the same settlement. And the other ones were inducted, while they would not be the paratroopers like we were. Let's see, I was where?

A: You were talking about you were at the settlement and everyone was happy to see Walodia home and . . .

Q: Walodia, yeah. So I said for this settlement they saw two heroes, Walodia and me. And the greetings they gave me almost made a change in my heart and soul of thinking the way my future is to go. I went down so low as to say to myself I'm going to farm with Walodia and I'm going to forget any longer that I'm a Jew or was a Jew. Because the greeting, the way I was received for the days ensuing, and that always went on a week's time. Each morning I would go ahead with Walodia on his land and it was harvest time, get involved with the

same thing he was doing. At night we would go out together like Russian style to have some drinking. And I figured, hey, what the heck, that's the life to live. I'll go back to all that sorrow, I thought maybe that's an escape for me. Then comes Friday, Walodia says to me, "Harold, aren't you going to go into Debrecen to see your Jews?" And that struck me quick like a lightening went through my body, you know. I says what am I thinking about going to become a non-Jew, and I immediately began to think you can run, but you cannot hide. And his words to me about -- he didn't say, "Harold, how about going into town and to see our partisans," because the Jews that he was making reference to were not survivors, they were partisans but they were in other companies or groups likely. But they were basically with us in the forest. That issue for him saying Jews instead of partisans, it's like gave me a tremor in my body that no, that was not the way to think the way I was thinking those few days. I'm going to probably become a Gentile and get married and forget about all that. I said to him, "Oh, yes, Walodia. I was thinking to tell you about it, but I did not have the nerve of disrupting all that work that you have on the farm. But, please, whenever time will permit you, I would want to go in to visit." And not using that word, "Jews," with out partisan friends, and not using it in singular, but using much rather plural. However, I says, "Let us cross near the Jewish cemetery of Debrecen because I will ask sort of for you to make a stop there." Because in that cemetery I had both my grandparents. They still died before, no matter what the tribulations were as I was talking about, so they still were brought to burial there. My father also was buried there. So I sort of, like I say, was all of a sudden another person again. And as we came to the cemetery, needless to say, that I could never see the headstones that were put because the headstones were desecrated by the local area during that year, which they were made to sidewalks and everything else. So my trip was not fully in vain because at least I saw that not only were the local, the living destroyed and harassed, but even the dead did not have their peace to remain in peace in the places where they were placed there. I did my share of crying, and all of a sudden, I was not a hero. The killer, the partisan that I was, I became the Jew again. Time was not running fast enough for me to come into Debrecen, so I could meet up with some of my former mates that I was together in the _____ group or being in the other group. And I found the girls that I remembered that had rode with us, so they sort of cling together. Nobody returned back into their homes, but much rather in one's home, the girls were staying. So they were in one home, the three girls were staying together. One of the girls that I remembered when I was with _____, we sort of shared backs because sleeping at night and her husband was the bosky, which I mentioned who had run away at that time from our areas to Mariànskè, she was there. And then I saw, I met two more, and, of course, they were very happy at, you know what I mean, that I did come. Basically, there were more girls by comparison to say a lot, than the Jews. And then I went to meet up with the Dalchovitz (ph) family, and at the time I already heard that three girls from Debrecen went to Baranovichi and they situated themselves with work over there. They did not want to remain in a smaller town like Briesen was. Be that it was some fear, that's why they cling. The man would stay in one house even if it was their house, former house I mean, or someone else's. But it wasn't like somebody moved in especially like the Dalchovitz. At that particular time, there were three brothers. So it's understanding that they were in their former home that they reclaimed. But the girls, I found that three of those living ones were left and they could have, in other words, moved in back to theirs. But they stayed

in the one house over there. And we did not hear of any bad feelings about it for the returning partisans when they came to Debrecen. A lot of them reclaimed their properties without even going through the legal process. Be that the Gentiles were fearful of invoking the law on them will hurt their future, or they did it as a gesture of their own, I would not be able to at this time to place judgment to tell you one way or the other. Because either way or both of things would have been accurate and assumption. And I told them that I have undertaken a job in Baranovichi, and I will look up our girls over there, the three of them, since I know now that they are in Baranovichi, near. So my stay over there was burning under my feet. That whole epithet with Walodia bringing me back out of sort of, I don't want to use that word, that was a dream. Because if it was a dream, I must have to call it a bad dream. Or facing again the places of murder. Seeing in the middle of the town that for that short little time the partisans were there, they built a fence around. Painted up in white, and sort of put on an insignia to say that here are buried all those killed in the massacre of Debrecen. You know, without knowing the amount or whatever it is and that sort of remained like a monument place that I believe I last heard of that it was a little bit improvement, more sign for that place. Because as I stated it before in my recordings to say they were afraid to take them out to the big pits that the Russian making because of the fear of the partisans. So we saw that the pits filled up with lime on the top, that we whatever we are could find Debrecen. But the difference was now that I saw friends and I saw a sign telling who is buried underneath there.

Q: You didn't have any family or . . .

A: Of course, my brothers, my sister, my uncles, my aunts. I had quite a big family which I don't till this day were they killed and burned inside the ghetto or were they brought out and killed in these holes in the center of the town, which they were led from the bombings when the war had started.

Q: No one left?

A: No, no one survived it. I had my uncle which I mentioned who in my hideout came, and he survived them and he came to the forest. He told me that my brother started to fight the police back and they didn't shoot him, but they beat him to death on the outside of the apartment. So that's what I was told by him. And what had happened the fate of where they were buried? My uncle and my rest of the brothers and sisters, I did not know. So perhaps maybe this is the bitterness in me over why I never cared to return to Debrecen to face the evil. To see the injustices the way people and that era, and with no one to turn to to their help or to their safety. So I cut shorter even the time and then I returned to Baranovichi. When I returned to Baranovichi, I looked up those three girls. Russa (ph) was the one you recollect in my conversation telling that she was the one taking care of that _____ führer. And it was another girl, there was another girl who her boyfriend that she was dating at the time met the last few days of liberation to them in the forest, he met his death at that time while on a mission fighting there. And I, of course -- she was his girlfriend, and so she was in bedroom, and then was one more, Sonja, which she's in the USA. As a matter of fact, she

lives in one of the condos in Boca, which I've seen. But she was living in New York before. So those three girls housed themselves together, and often they told me that they used to get Jewish guys as pilots or so coming to their apartment. So all of a sudden, I was invited by them sort of to become a frequent visitor whenever I have time, you know. Which when time permitted me, I was. Now, I must step over to tell you another epithet which it happened while being in the NKVD. The NKVD work, which it may sound odd in the Soviet Union that it went on, really I had one payroll check, but I was doing the work of four. I was a secretarial job. I was the man in charge of the whole auto -- in other words, they had so many autos in the department, I was the one issuing for them gasoline tickets. I was the one doing the accounting of consumption of all of that. And I also was the one responsible with another job that once a Minsk car would go to bring all kinds of stuff, be uniforms or whatever the department needed, which it was located in Minsk. They kept it in Byelorussia, so as I say -- and before the holidays so any roundups, I had to go duty as a KGB which I was assigned with maybe two more guys and go to the houses. As the time of year it is, as I say, the war was not over in total as yet, because the war went on until about May the 7th or the 8th when it was declared the war was over. So every time before a holiday was nearing, we used to have to go to search homes and search passports and different documents. Because we were told there are crime going on, and there are many people who resist the Soviet system because we used to give our political speeches. And it's our job to go and turn all of these here criminals in. On one of these here journeys, one day it happened I was again the head of the group, there were three of us. I knock on the door, and then I'm jumping the gun because that happened already when I was married. I got married in January of 1945, and, you know, we are quite a bit off yet. We are still talking about September, you know, August, September, nearing October.

Q: Let's just stick with the . . .

A: So with that mission at that particular time, we were assigned to look for criminals. What was the criminal? Somebody who did not report to be inducted. That was a criminal. Everybody in their passport had to have a separate page stamped from the induction center that he's released from induction because maybe he was not fit medically -- I mean, physically. Maybe he wasn't. There were other deficiencies, but on the passport if you did not have that stamp or that page proving to you that you were released from service becoming a soldier in other words, being inducted, you had to turn them in. And believe me a lot of times maybe the people have fear, did not have the documents with them, and we used to round up so much time. And then if they were questioned, they didn't find anything to hold them, they would let them out. Now, that particular night I'm knocking on the door, and I was first to knock on the door. And I keep telling them, I said, "Make the lights. This is the KGB coming for an inspection. Everybody come out holding their passports ready for examination." In it comes out a voice in Yiddish with Hebrew stating say, " _____," which translating that into English means Hebrew or Jew, keep on walking. It sounds so strange in a way and it got me in a very peculiar way. I went outside, closed the door, and I said -- the others say, "Something going on?" I says, "Everything is in order. Everything is fine. Let us proceed to the next mission." He left me, however, with a feeling, I feel like I

must go back to that place. Find out who was that guy who was talking. You know what I mean? So sure enough, the next day in the middle of the day I'm coming there in uniform. I knock on the door, and I met him in there. I says, "I was the guy last night. Who was the one who said, " _____"? And he said he don't want to commit himself until -- which by coincidence of how it would be, that was a cousin. A first cousin to my wife who was also a partisan at _____. And he was trying to beat, because the war was coming over, who wanted to be inducted? And after a while surviving a ghetto, surviving a partisan, and right now he had to go back to fight? Besides the man was older, but he was still leading the criterion of age, and he could not have any other way of saving himself from not going. So they were really hiding out sort of waiting all of the days until it will come to an end and the induction probably won't be here. Which I had to tell him, we got to talk word for word he was with the _____, and word for word we got to talk about who I know and what, where and when. And I tried to tell him, give him my wife's name. He says, "You know, that's my first cousin." So it was such a coincidence, we're thrown again in a funny kind of situation. I tried to tell, I says, "I'm working the KGB. I hope you understand. We met now, but I cannot give my head for you guys' hiding. At this moment, you better do what you want to do. I don't want to find you again when I come here. I really cannot protect you, so you got to do what you got to do." Which they moved away back, you know what I mean, someplace else. And, you know, it so happens neither one of them was inducted. They got themselves secure jobs that they shouldn't be able to be inducted. And that was another little story to tell what had happened over there. The next thing what had happened to me over there that every time the captain would see me from the employment, he would turn around and say to me, "You know, you need to go back to school because on your post that you have, you can only -- must be at least a first lieutenant. You have no rank. We keep you here because we don't have any men, and besides you deserve it. You were in the partisans," and so on. So I says, "Where is that school at?" And he would tell me the school that was in Russia. In my mind I did not have the love for the Soviet system even then in my mind, and it was sort of a secretive part in me because you could not talk or disclose. In other words, I didn't ask to go to work to the KGB. I was sort of forced into it in a way. And I started to tell him that at the moment I wish I could get just a little bit more time to get the past out of my system. I mean, you know, the war is about -- not over yet, and I will take it under consideration. Because over there they tell you to do, but it's got to come in a form that you ask for it. That I will find in the proper time the papers to be sent to a special school of officers to be able to further my career. At the same time to get an apartment was terrible. Many nights I would sleep in the apartment because as much as the man responsible for finding housing and the housing man with a family they implanted somebody. And they used to say find room for Harold or Joe, or whatever it is and that's what it was. For families, it was almost impossible because a lot of the houses were burned, you know, and destroyed. And here there was influx of so many more Soviets coming in because to take over the offices and make it under their control. So it was -- I got in a very bad mood, and one day I come into the office. And I say to my captain there, which he was the boss of the employment, I says, "I decided that I want to join the service." He says, "Wait a minute, you little so-and-so. Do you know where you're at? Have you forgotten that you're working for the KGB? In the KGB, you're not coming to tell me what you are going to do, what you

intend to do. We are going to tell you what to do, when to do it." He says, "I will tell you whether you can go and register as a volunteer to go to the army. Besides, we are on a special statute. You cannot be drafted without us from the KGB allowing you to serve. And you cannot serve in the KGB of the military. You haven't got the education and you haven't got the rank. So, therefore, get it out of your head and don't you dare ever come to ask me things like that on your own." It fell not on deaf ears, but very open ears. I began to feel more scared than I felt secure before. I had a problem at that particular time, as I said, with housing. And with food, I did not have so much a problem because I was eating in the officers' restaurant, and at officers' restaurant the food was much better. I had a guy, Captain Trusoff (ph), who was in charge of financial department, and he would give me extra coupons because we wore Russian cards at that time. But in the restaurant for the officers, you could eat what you want and as much as you want, but had to have that card. So whenever I wanted to have more than one meal I would go to Captain Trusoff (ph), and I was a young man and I was a hungry person at the time for years when I was coming back to myself. So he would see to it that if I need something, Captain Trusoff (ph) would be at my side. Before long behind that announcements that all the people who came from the formerly Poland and wish to return back can right now come and register at the Polish Soviet Commission and, you know, the hours and everything like that. Naively, I think nothing of it. I forget myself again and the words that he said about the KGB. I go ahead and register myself the place that I was born. They knew that I was born in the city, you know, that it was in Poland. And I tell them when I register that I'm willing for a settlement to go back to Poland, not thinking for one moment that everything from that office is going to come immediately to the KGB and they will immediately know that I went again to do something without permission, especially not an assignment. And that's this thing what had happened the following the day when I came to work -- do we have enough time? When I came to work, my door was locked. My boss locked the door. The other secretary was not let in to come in, and he asked me to face him to sit down at his desk. And he started a full investigation about Harold. State your name. State your address. State your age. Where were you born, and tell him all about myself like my history and the way I was in the partisans. And I was a platoon commander, and all of this here. And then he turns around, as if he wouldn't know, "Tell me, I see you're wearing two medals. Would you explain me what these medals is?" I say to him, "But I already told you before when I was hired here on the job what these medals are. What do you want ask me?" In the meanwhile, tantrum is setting in on me. But he bangs his hand on the table, and he says, "I already told you many times when I ask a question, you are to answer now when I ask you, and not to tell me that you already. When I ask you any question, you must answer it to me." Okay. So I tell him what these here two medals stand for. I already -- as I said which I will tell in another part, the way I got married and what had happened, was wearing a ring that my father-in-law bought me at that time. He says, "What is that ring which you're wearing? Don't you know that that's a showing of bourgeois?" In other words, in our system, people do not wear rings because I answered him that it's a ring that I got from my father-in-law as a gift from getting married. Okay.

Q: We're going to stop.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

Q: Now, I'm just trying to remember where we were when we stopped.

A: We still are talking about right now that I registered, heard about registration to go back to Poland, if you remember. And I said I'm right now with the boss in my office with a locked door. And he's asking me all sorts of questions.

Q: Okay. Let's pick up here.

A: Okay. Ready? The questions ensued until about lunch hour. The lunch hour we started at 1 o'clock at that time. The boss called a halt and we're going for lunch. Since I was eligible and used to go to the same officers' restaurant as him, he told me they're going to stop right now and go for lunch. To my surprise when I came out to the restaurant, so many officers, all of sudden, like the news spread out. Everybody all of a sudden found out that Harold registered to go to Poland, and everybody knows, but Harold didn't know about it, see? And here I'm put to a dilemma, some officers be that they served in the police, be that they worked in the KGB with me, taking it for a total shock as if to say how dare you do a thing like that? You brought shame on us. Here, look at him. He is a -- look at him, he is a second lieutenant. Look at the other one in all kinds of ranks. You're living here in a country where the Jews have all the privileges and all the rights, and you are trying to away? I says, "What do you mean, trying to go away? It was published for anybody who was born in Poland who can return back." "Why do you want to go back to Poland?" I said, "Poland is the same. We are in Poland as it's here. Maybe by hook or by crook, I can look up some of my families or whatever it is. I am not escaping, or anything like that. I would like to go ahead to see that." "No, no, no. Poland is anti-Semitic, and you have no rights and business to go back." I says - - so he says to me, "I want you -- I cannot order you -- that you must go back and withdraw your registration. All of us officers here, you're loved by us all. We like you, you must return our rights to us now because you brought shame on us. And you must be erasing that. So the only way for you to do it is you must go back and resign." There at lunch I meet up also with Captain Trusoff, who I said was the head of the finance department, and he was a very fast-talking guy, a man who could talk so fast that you could hardly hear him as fast as he was saying. But he was a tremendous able man in the area of financing and accounting and so on. And often would like to talk with me and train me in that endeavor, which it meant more work for me, you know. And he says, "Harold, what are you trying to do?" Here, a captain in the KGB. I tell him the story. He said, "Don't tell me none of which you're trying to tell the others. You don't like it here. You want to run away from here because you want to go to America. You still like the story of commerce and everything like that. So I don't want to buy anything of this here." Listening to him, and he was like my right hand supplying with food and so on, I was sort of under his guard. I cannot afford him not to turn against me. I said, "Captain Trusoff, would you please tell me what you would like for me to do? I will listen." He says, "Good. You go and ask permission from your boss, and you go back to the commission over there and make an official resignation. And everything will be fine, stay like this here." I says, "I'm going to ask my boss and I will do it. And thank you for advising

me. I'm sorry I caused all of that to you." I apologized to all of them, and that's it. We went to eat. Coming back, my boss started with the questions. I told him, I says, "Please forgive me. I would like to ask a favor of you." He says, "What is it?" I says, "I realized after talking to Captain Trusoff and naming my name all the other officers, that I made a grave mistake. I did not make that mistake maliciously or knowingly. I made that mistake for not thinking about what I was doing, so I beg your pardon of forgiveness. And I want to get time so I can go to the commission and register -- and in other words, resign officially on the document. Would you tell me that I can do it?" He says, "Tomorrow, you can do it in the regular hours of lunch. You can go there and resign." And he began to continue still with his questioning and he said that's the good thing that what I did now, and he appreciates it very much that I'm restoring my dignity of the office, the job over here. And he knows that that is not going to hurt my qualifications of whatever it is further to be done. And I was turning back to my work, the secretary came back in, and I thought maybe that it's all over. Two hours later, I was called into another office, and again, the same thing started again. What it meant is now, they were trying to compare notes as to what I was asked earlier, am I going to be repeating again. I became so annoyed with it and so scared that I ran up a fever. We used to have a big break of the hours between 6:00 and 8:00 for two hours. Which it was like dinnertime. I told the officer that I'm in charge that I am -- I feel like I have a fever, and I don't think I'll be able to walk home. I need the help of a taxi -- I mean, I said taxi. A cab, we did not have taxis there. So I was given a cab to be taken home. When I came home, I took a thermometer and equal to the temperature as we would have, I almost had a 101 and 1/2. And I was shivering when I came into the house that I was living in it, where also former partisans and some of them came back. So I tried to tell them the story, what had ensued with me, what it's all about, and that I have a problem. How can I relay that message to my wife, which she was in Shevchenko or _____ or Chita or it's any of the three names that it's been called, all three, to tell her what had transpired over here? And when time came for me to come back to work, I didn't. And all of sudden, I hear the roar of a car. And in those days when you heard a roar from a car, it could have been only from the police of the KGB because civilian people did not driving cars. And when I look out of the window, I saw the Commandant himself came in and walked in the house. He came into the house, asked me, "How come you're not at work?" I tell him, I says, "I developed a temperature, that's how I was taken. I couldn't come home." And I show him the temperature. He says, "I have an order to bring you back, so I don't want to hear any of your excuses, temperature, whatever it is." Well, the women over there in the house on the other side, "Harold, take off your ring." I was having a watch. "Take off the watch." I was under the pretension that I'm taken in to be arrested, no other way. And I'm leaving them a message, you know what I mean? One woman is offering me to take a sandwich with me, you know what I mean? I say, "I'm not hungry." Who could eat at a time like that? And I came, was brought back to the office, to my office that I worked from. I'm sitting there for a half-hour and almost like malaria got on me. I was shivering. And I could see the boss, the captain is not in. And like I expressed so many times before, I was in that time a rebel. I picked up the phone and called the general. The general was the head of the whole regional KGB. He was a hero from the war missing one hand, which he had lost in battle. And that's what had helped him regain to have that rank what he got over there. And at times each one of us had assignments to be on guard duty for 24 hours in the main office

into various assignments. Some of them were encoding and decoding and some of them were just answering the phone and so on.

Q: Would you just stop a second? Ready?

A: I'm speaking now from the time I came home, like I said?

Q: Yes.

A: No more from the time I came home. Asking for the (inaudible). All this interviewing got me shaken up to so much that I just -- my feet wouldn't walk. I felt very weak, and I had to summon that they should send out a car to take me home for the big break, which they did. And I went by car way home. As soon I came into the apartment, I disclosed to my friends because I want you to know each room meant a family is living. It wasn't an apartment when I mean to say that one person had two rooms or three rooms. The whole house where I'm referring to had about four rooms, but four rooms meant four families were living there. And those families, with the exception of one, were also who was survivors that they survived in the forest. That one family was in the Soviet Union at that time before the war broke out, so they were saved from the agony of the ghetto and so on. And they just came back from the Soviet Union, so to them it was a different story to know what had happened and to find out how much they missed the hangman in their own right. So I came in there, told them the whole story what had ensued. I immediately got words from the people advising take off your ring, take off your watch. Because the atmosphere became that I probably will wind up under arrest, and who know what the outcome will be? My biggest worry was how do I get the news to my wife, who was Shevchenko or _____ at the time, which it was -- sure, by train it was not too far. But telephones, we did not have. The only way if I would want to get -- if I was to know somebody from the KGB and call him and come and tell them, which you know that was a dream that I could not even dream about. But people used to come daily to Baranovich from Chita, and I knew another family over there whose husband also the same age as my wife's and she was going to school in the same way. He used to work for the KGB in the -- on the railroad KGB, and her parents were also from the same city, from Chita. And, therefore, I decided that someone should go to her and through her maybe would be able to get words to my wife about what is going on. Because I did not know will I be arrested, or what it will take place at the time. So, anyways, I came home. I couldn't eat or go to eat, and I couldn't go back to work since I started to take my temperature. I felt that I have a temperature, and the temperature registered equal to our temperature reading about 101 over, you know. I was shivering and everything like that. My being back to work was supposed to be at 8 o'clock; 6:00 to 8:00 was the two hours. It must have been about 20 past 8:00 that we heard the roar of a car. And to hear the roar of a car was not a common thing because civilians did not drive around in cars. So a car we could only hear from an official, and the official would either be KGB or the police, any of these here places. I took a look who's going out with the car, and it was the Commandant, as we would call him. The Commandant is the head person who was in charge of providing every necessary thing for all the working people in the KGB in that building. And he also had a rank, it was his control so if you

needed housing, he was the one providing housing for you. If you needed to go be transferred someplace, whatever, what arrangements would have been transportation and so, he would provide that, too. And I say to him, "I cannot go back to work. I have a temperature." He says, "I got an order, and you know that an order is to be filled out, you have to come to come with me and I'm taking you. Okay? Don't let me use force," he says, "Harold." I says, "No, no. I didn't say that." I went in, came into my office where he let me out. No one is there, my boss is not there. I have no one to talk with. Now, I used that word 6:00 to 8:00 because we did not have prescribed hours that you work to 10:00 or until 12:00. Sometimes we would work till the wee hours, till 12 o'clock. And at times, before I had my apartment -- my apartment I only got after I got married to my wife. Otherwise, a lot of times, I would sleep in the office like this here on the table or on the floor, one of the two. Because apartments was at a dire shortage in Baranovichi in those days. So I see he's not there, and here I'm feeling shivering like malaria with a fever. I picked up the telephone to talk directly to the general. The general was the head of the whole regional KGB department, and he knew of me from before. Because I used to be there sometimes that we used to have on a 24-hour guard, and I would be there. And he would like for me to tell him stories of the partisans or he would tell me stories about the front lines. He lost his left arm, and that's what he was rewarded. In other words, that post that he was gotten. And I call him up, and he says to me, "What can I do for you?" I tell him. "I was brought here to my office because of my boss' request. I am sick with a fever, and he is not even there. I don't know what he wants me for." He says, "Your boss is sitting right next to me over here. Why don't you speak to him directly?" I says, "Thank you very much," you know. He gave him the phone and I talked to him. I says, "I really don't know why you brought me here. I am sick. That's why I asked before to have a car taking me home. I have a fever." As we're speaking, "I've got about 41 degrees which it's a high fever." 42 is the highest. I says, "I cannot be on my feet; I'm shivering." He says, "Okay. Well, I'm going to order you a cab and you go back home." This is the way I saw right there the way the KGB works. You're sick or whatever it is, everybody is calm, composed, and you will not realize. And no one came telling me what I was called for or what it was all about. And I was taken back home. As I was taken back home, I had a hard time to fall asleep that night. I wanted -- I thought falling asleep would do me the best. I just lie awake, and I don't know what I really did to myself. Why did I think that stupidly to get involved with registering to go back to Poland and everything like that? And I almost thought I put my life on the line, and my biggest worry how do I get words to Sonja, to my wife about what's going on? Anyways, in the morning, I showed to work, and with the last whatever force I had I walked. I didn't -- first of all, there was no phone that I could call in to have a car pick me up. And to await the decency I knew that it would not happen, so I got up with an early start and showed up for work. And as I came to work, I saw my boss and the rest of them. No conversation ensued about anything like that. I went over to him only and said, "Do you remember that you permitted me today at my lunch hour time to go to the office, the mixed commission of the Polish and Soviet, and resign?" He says, "Yes, I remember. What are you trying to ask me?" I says, "I'm trying to confirm at this time since we're getting to our lunch hour. I think I'd rather go before I eat. Is it okay with you?" He says, "You may leave right now." And I left right into that office and resigned. And the reason resigning, I was asked what it is, I wrote in, "I realized that I have made a mistake.

That really I have no reason to go back to Poland. I feel good to where I am, and I'm happy to remain here." I came into the restaurant and I met some of the officers again that I met the day before, and I was trying to tell them the good news about that I resigned. "Oh, we knew that you're the right kind of guy and you know the right thing what to do." And everybody sort of instead of shying away from me like they did the big day, the previous day. Now, all of sudden, they came a little closer. "We are very happy what you did, and you'll be very happy with had happened." But in my heart I figured I cannot resign really from that. And I had to plan a new way and justify in my mind what to do about escaping the Soviet Union at all.

Q: Okay. Now, pardon me for asking this, but when you say, "resign," you're using it a little differently than I would, I think. When you said you went in to resign, what does that mean?

A: You write a paper resignation, like you resign of a job.

Q: You're resigning from the KGB?

A: No. Resigning from wanting to go to Poland.

Q: Okay. That's what I needed to get clear. It's a little different.

A: That means I wrote a resignation. First, I applied that I wanted permission to go Poland. Now, I did the reverse. There was another form that I filled out that I no longer wished to go to Poland.

Q: So you basically revoked your former . . .

A: I revoked -- if that word, "revoked" makes you better feeling about it, that's fine.

Q: It just makes -- I just wanted to be clear.

A: Okay.

Q: Let me ask you one other thing while we're stopped here. You used the term, "KGB." You began by using the term, "NKVD." Are these the same organization you're talking about?

A: NKVD was used through the years. However, as of late maybe for the last -- before the Soviet was broken up, but maybe even under the resistance way back about 20 years, this department, which it was the security department of the Soviet Union, was changed. And the acronym of the words were no longer NKVD, but they remain KGB; also, the acronym of the office of security for the Soviet Union.

Q: So you used . . .

A: So I used that merely that the reader, whichever way he knows or he heard, that's either it's NKVD or KGB, it's one of the same offices that it was changed. As of today when we refer to Soviet, they still refer to KGB because of the later . . .

Q: Thank you. One other thing I think we need to go back to before you leave the Soviet Union. You're mentioning a wife. Now, nowhere do I know how you met someone or where you got married or when. So can we backtrack and you tell me how that wound up?

A: Yes. I'll backtrack this part till I come to tell you the rest of this story because I decided that that decision must be done with me and my wife and her father. Because no longer could I in my life think of myself, I had a partner to worry and help me decide my future. I met my wife after I became platoon commander. I became platoon commander sometimes in early '43. Afterwards I was taken away from my brigade, former brigade as I was, and was adopted to the new brigade that it was formed by Geno Tsinko (ph) which they were known either as the easterners or the paratrooper division and so on. In my platoon that I was given the charge of was one young man who hails from the same city as my wife came from who also was coming from the same hiding hut, let's refer to it as a hut, because it was built in a part of the ground and above the ground. And in that hut were living quite a few families in the family camp, as I mentioned before. But the family camp was not close to us; it was close to the other people from her home town, or as we would call them in fighting groups of the _____ trap.

Q: Her home town was?

A: Zential (ph), _____ in Yiddish, the way they called it. They had a special name. So we had heard that young man live before and he decided to join the fighting part and he was put into my platoon. Through him while we would have to come on certain assignment things that were taking place, I needed a guide because that area was not as well familiar to me in the new place where we were at that time operating. So these guides, we had the guides who were in that hiding house that he knew, I think, every tree, where it's located in the forest. Because he used to deal with live cattle buying, you know what I mean, before. So he would often be with the farmers involved, and that man used to be an uncle to that guy, Lade (ph) was his name, who was in my platoon. So he would take me there at times when we would go because he wanted to visit with them. In the meanwhile on one of those occasions, I spotted my present wife who was there. There were more girls besides her, and this is what the start that the romance had started. Of course, she had two guards with her, her brother, who survived; and her father, may he rest in peace now. But he survived and came with us to the United States just as well. So she was well cared for by them, and I only was able to talk, you know, with that little talk. And at night, when we would go to sleep, they would make sure that I don't touch my present wife because father and brother were right in place in the right places. So it used to be that I, from talking, that I began to sort of get a liking for her, but I was not in the era a lover, per se. I had previous, which I didn't mention, I had a girl that I again was asked to be in love with her. And -- but we had to disrupt it under the circumstances because they wanted to live in the family camp, and I said

I didn't come to the forest for any other reason but to fight. And I, therefore, did not want to hear about family camp at all. And while from occasion to occasion, I used to meet up with her to help her out. But again I disrupt it because she wanted to get serious, and I was not a person at the time for seriousness as to get involved even for dating steady. I was very much -- I was very much afraid in case, you know, from one thing leads to another, and who know? You make the girl pregnant, and then you get killed. Why bring in another person irresponsibly? The way I was feeling at the time. And in all to tell you is babies were born. Abortions were performed. There was all kinds of things that it goes on in regular life, went on also in the forest. Under different circumstances, of course, not the way it here goes on, but it still went on and it's a fact to state. Afterwards when we got liberated, when I came back from my march for the two weeks that I went with Walodia, my wife held a grudge -- my present wife held a grudge at me for a while over why I didn't stop at her home town. But I rather decided to go with Walodia to his home and to go to Chita. And be for what it's worth it while I was working in the KGB, one day while going from work -- to work early in the morning, I think from distance I saw somebody look like her. And the other girl which was a girlfriend who lived in that same apartment which I later wound up living. And before long, I closed the door and exited out and I make sure to my eyes that I had seen her. I met with her and talked with her, and the girl told me now where she lives, and I promised her that I will be in touch. And our romance began to sort of start. To tell you how it was with me in those days, I did not write letters. I wrote poems rather, and this was my expressing a love to her and so on. By the way, if I didn't mention, I have six or seven published poems, which I have the books, and the majority of them are dedicated to the Holocaust and some of them -- in one of them in the poems, like I said, I used that same words, I didn't come to the forest to fight -- I mean, to just hide, but I came to the forest to fight. And that's what's making my rhyming words. If you'll be interested some day, I'll let you read them, but it's been work that I did. And that's how we used to do, and from time to time she would come to visit to my home town. She had where to stay, but with me, I did not get the time off to be able to do it.

Q: How far was Baranovichi from Chita?

A: I would say in the kilometers way of saying, at least I would say about a hundred kilometers. Because first of all, from her to the railroad station, we had to walk about 16 kilometers. It wasn't such an easy task, and believe it or not in those years, winter or not, we would walk from the train station to her house and, of course, I used to walk and keep my pistol open. I mean, just in case. But that was again what I said, the training from the forest and gun on the side sort of made me satisfied that I worked for the KGB. Because I couldn't part with that pistol at that particular time.

Q: When did you get married?

A: We got married January 5, 1945. After -- now, before I got married, I tried to ask -- because you had to fill out forms and write for permission to get married. And since she was in her home town, she couldn't come to me. Since she was working in a place, a publishing place

for the local paper, so she was typesetter, and she couldn't get permission because there was no one to replace her. I couldn't get permission because I was filling three, four jobs all the time. So it was sort of we couldn't get to each other, so I was denied the third time after writing to get off. After the third time denial, I did not ask anymore. On a clear Monday -- but it was not so clear -- it was a stormy snow at that time in Baranovichi, I decided to call her friend -- not the girlfriend that I aforementioned before, but the family, Briner (ph) was her name, to call on her because she was sort of trying to talk me into getting married sooner and that the better part of my life would have been improved and so on. And we made a friendship sort of through that time through her friend who was living in the city. So I frequently used to come visiting with them so I could hear regards from Sonja and so on. So I went over there to her, and I told her, I says, "Look, we are going tonight." "What do you mean, Harold? Did they give you permission?" I says, "I have no permit. We are going to the railroad station. We are going tonight to Chita or Göttingen (ph), so I did. Snow or no snow, we came there. We walked that walk all the way to the house, and when I came into the house, Sonja was by herself and she was shocked. Why didn't I tell her before? Her father would have been able to prepare. I says, "Tell you what? I couldn't tell you. But if I write to you a letter that I'm trying to go ahead and take off without a permit, you should understand better than that. I came, it's tonight." So the first thing she went running to find her father. Her father then was playing cards in another house, and he came in. And, of course, it was a problem. He wouldn't permit me to go sleep with her, obviously, to say. So we decided tomorrow, the following day, Tuesday, that we are going to go into -- it was called Zachs (ph). Zachs was the marriage license department officially in the Soviet Union, so we went to make that official. No sooner we got registered there and everything like that, I got a note to the house. Because the guys that were former partisans were working in the KGB here and with the police also the same way. So they came quickly to the house to tell me that they are not going to arrest me, but I have a warrant for my arrest and now that I came to the officialdom -- everything was tied into the KGB. If you got married, the KGB got some of the knowledge about it, too, because that's how they controlled the population. I being aware or not aware, I did it and I didn't care. I was the rebel at the time that I didn't care what's going tomorrow or the next hour. So they said to me, "Harold, when do you decide to go back?" I says, "I plan on going back Thursday, no later." They say, "Okay, we'll cover you till Thursday, but Thursday you better get your fanny out of here because otherwise we got to arrest you." Of course, it looks like the KGB was notified officially after that where I am and that I'm on my way back and I'll be there. And my father-in-law, may he rest in peace, gave me Vodka to take home because he used to do black market dealing. He used to make the uppers for boots, and boots in those days was like a jeweler, you know. Everybody liked to have a pair of boots, and that gave him enough from the farmers who from making boots, that will would bring him all kinds of food in the house so it was no shortage. And before long he used to go into black marketeer to get the other materials, leather and so on. He would go to Vilna or other places for the raw materials. So she got him, and we already were married officially sort of the next morning because it was, and for that night we planned on a Tuesday night to plan to have an official Jewish ceremony. So we got a hold the acting sort of rabbi, who was also a man who was in the partisans, but he was a blacksmith. And through history we know there were blacksmith rabbis in the times of the sages, so it was a

_____. However, it came to write exuba (ph), meaning the marital contract, he tells me he does not know how. I says, "I do know how, but, you know, I was a student of that. But it's illegitimate, you cannot write your own contract. It must be fulfilled by somebody else." So we decided just in his presence and the presence of witnesses to give hands and it became sort of a married officialdom with all the other things, but without getting that official document, exuba (ph). But officially we went through the whole -- and the guys were there, the former partisans, we had a house party to celebrate our wedding. But it was officially as it could be. Legally and officially, although not for the Jewish. So that's when we got married, and I came back. For greetings when I came in, I was arrested. I was asked to surrender my gun immediately. The Commandant took me under arrest and charged me with desertion. The thing, he put me into the jailhouse. A few hours later, after two hours, no one other than the general himself is coming down. And he says to him to the Commandant, "Why did you arrest him?" So he said he did, he had the order for desertion, so he turned around to me. "Would you please tell me what has transpired?" I tell him, I says, "Three times I made applications filed through my boss that he knows for giving me permission to go and get married." I says, "I thought getting married is constitutional. However, I needed to do it in writing. I did, I lived up to it and three times I was turned down. So I got tired." He says, "I got to put boss in jail." He says, "Get him out." He says, "Not you." I thanked him, and afterwards I said to the Commandant, "You see, I brought you salami and Vodka," and we turned it into sort of a festive mood. And I went back to my office to continue my work, and no charges whatever. But at the same time I was fearful, so I left words with my father-in-law and discussed the issue of escape with him. And I said to him, "Let's wait over a week or two. And please go ahead under this and this name." As I said at the outset of my recording that my birth name was Zuckerman. I changed Zuckerman to Zissman; that's when the changing took place. I registered because as Zissman, there was no one they can trace it to. So I didn't care how long it will take them to find out who that Zissman is. Rather that is the KGB problem, but I told them they send in my brother-in-law -- my present brother-in-law, he went in sort of to be the person and they knew him. You know, in small towns they knew each other, and my new name became -- as far as the Polish government was concerned, was Zissman and it was all changed. And I was awaiting when the papers will be ready for them to let me know and I'll make the escape. However, deep in me -- and I was called now to go ahead for duty at the office of the general. I was afraid that somebody's not playing and I said to my boss, I said, "Why are you sending me after all I committed?" He says, "You were told already too many times. When something's wrong, we'll tell you. You have no reason for me to tell you. You asked to go for duty; you going to go up for the _____ duty, and that's all. And ask yourself, I don't ask you to go out to get a new _____ and _____ mines." I did go and the next day after jury duty I was called to do my regular work which since I was planning my going to Minsk which it was part of the once a month that I would go for supplies, the uniform or the other one. And that used to be a week's going away. I would take a train to go to Minsk, and once I used to be saddled with more of my needs than I had to supply and the supplies were there in order, I used to call for a truck and they would send up a truck for me to come in. From Minsk to Baranovichi, it used to be more than a day's driving because firstly, the road and the transportation type of trucks, the way it was. I, therefore, instead of going on the train to Minsk turned around and went to

Chita, to my wife's home town, and finding out that my father-in-law got the papers already for me. If not, I got to know a time now because I'm afraid that it's burning under my feet to remain without doing anything about it. I did not trust the Soviet Union and the KGB that they are not ultimately going to arrest me, okay?

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

A: I finished all of that, I think. Yeah. I was right now . . .

Q: Well, your last words, you were in Chita and you were saying something to the effect that you knew you had to leave the Soviet Union.

A: Although like I said, I repented in the way they wanted me to do. But my own mind did not leave rest with me to make this here my permanent home. I still figured -- and I talked it over with my wife before leaving Chita and her father that as soon they can have the proper papers, which I said I had them do under an assumed name, ready for me that I will come and get the papers or else he can bring them to me to Baranovich with the papers and we are going to do. I had to get the goodwill of my wife and her father to go along with the program which that was part and I was going to get married, that I made up at first to say. If we cannot escape from here, there is no use in me getting involved and getting married. However, if that's what you want to do, that's fine with me. I'm willing one way or the other, so which I'm trying to say even though I said one thing, I still -- my mind was set out to do something else. I used this time period for detour to go to Chita just to find out how far the papers were going. To my amazement when I came there, I found out that it was a Polish holiday and the commission was closed; therefore, by no means could they get the papers ready that particular day. Since I had to go to Minsk which it was my regular route time of the month to pick up supplies, I hurried with -- my father-in-law gave me to take along some Vodka and some butter and other things because you had to bribe the officials to get work done, even in the KGB. So when you wanted to have work done fast, as it happened that I was detained for one day being over there, so I decided at this time not to lose any more time. And I came back to the train station and I couldn't get a civilian train, but it was a military train, showing them documents that I was working for the KGB, and I had to go to Minsk. The commander permitted me to go with their train, which that helped to make up time because their train was a direct train that it was going all the way to Minsk. So I made up quite a bit of time, as he promised, to have gotten a passenger train regularly going to Minsk. When I came to Minsk, I had my guy, which I usually used to call first. He was a Jewish boy named Rueben, which he was born in Minsk and lived in Minsk. And he was working also for the KGB. So I called him to tell him that I'm in town. He said, "Harold, weren't you supposed to be here yesterday?" I says, "Why do you say that?" He says, "Please clear it up to me." He says, "Major Spock (ph)," which that was his name, "was here yesterday in the office looking for you." I says, "I did not know that Spock was supposed to be here." Which I did not want to disclose to him, so it immediately gave me food for thought that they are not trusting me. And they sent Spock to set up to check for me to see did I really go to Minsk or perhaps I went elsewhere. So my suspicion was correct. I came, therefore, and I told them, "Tell the boys I got good stuff for them. I got Vodka, I got butter and other things. Here is my order." And by all means I must have that order ready because at that particular time that was already Tuesday, I said Wednesday, I'm going to call a truck, so I must have it ready by Wednesday so when my truck comes -- so Thursday for traveling and that's it. Which I, instead of going to the office now, called my office in Baranovich,

talking to my captain, the boss, and telling him that everything is going along all right. And it looks like by all means he should be able to send out a truck tomorrow, because I'll have everything under control. I said, "By the way" -- I didn't. I says, "I understand that Spock was looking here for me. Is there any reason what?" "I did not know," he pretends, "that Spock was there, so I could understand that he tried still again to prey on me." I says, "No, no, no, no. Spock was not looking for you. And if he did, I don't know why. I don't know where Spock is at all." And I went about my business and by all means possible Thursday I was back in town with everything. And my boss says to me, very graciously he says, "You see, and you want to leave us? Nobody can do things that good as you do. Everything is organized, and you're back." He gave me a lot of praise and fine. I says, "I'm going to have a surprise. My wife is here in town, and I want to bring her to you tomorrow to see." Because my plans were to proceed already. My father-in-law, my brother-in-law and my wife were already in the apartment because, as I said, I told them whenever the papers will be ready, ask no questions. You come here. I cannot let time lost -- get lost over here because I got a jump up and proceed. And now that I came back and I told my father-in-law the story, so they saw it was on the right track. So again to show you in a way you can say naive; on the other one you can see how brainwashed people are. As I said before, that I was trying to get my wife to move to Baranovichi, and she couldn't leave her job. I wanted permission for me to move to Chita, and I couldn't get it. So when I came, I introduced her. My father-in-law and brother-in-law, no. I introduced her to him. I said, "This is my wife. Meet her." He says, "You see, I told someday she'll be here." I says, "Of course, you helped a lot." I got enough to go along for the life story that he had a lot of help to it. And my plan was as soon as they say goodbye, we are going to -- as soon as they see him, they're going to say goodbye to her father and brother. And we are going to get to the station. We were not -- the office was not too far from the main station to go on train. I had to obtain tickets, which my father-in-law went to get them. I did not even want to be seen in anything like that. So my brother-in-law and father-in-law did. And I came back to the apartment, took off my uniform, let my belt with the gun, you know, and the whole thing come there. And I said to my brother-in-law, I says, "Please, tomorrow morning take it in. They'll ask you questions, you know, from not -- you came and you saw that I'm not there and I left the belting on, you did not know who is that in the house." Which he did and day afterwards came back to look in the apartment. Maybe they can find something about it, and he says he doesn't know. As it was told to me later another guy from the _____ who also served in the KGB, on the military KGB, he and that other guy which I aforementioned before who was with my wife's friend, married to my wife's friend, the two of them were sent all the way to Bialystok to look for me. I went on the train that evening and by morning I was in Bialystok. Bialystok was Poland, and that was not capital as Russia, but that was the big city. From where I grew up or from where I was born, it was 150 miles either way to go to either of the cities. Coincidentally, when I came there and I got into a house -- there wasn't hotels to go into then -- we used to go to gatherings where Jews are and it was on the move over there of all Europe. People were moving, coming back and going someplace, and other ones just for speculative purposes. The trains were loaded; people were on the top of the trains. Wherever they could room to get on a train people were there.

Q: When was this?

A: Now, we are talking about early May, not early the 1st or the 2nd, but it was in May of 19 -- it had to be about -- to finish what I'm going to say -- had to be about May the 11th or 10th. Something like here, of 1945. So we came there and take a look in the house. I found from my home town a guy who went to school with. We used to rent an apartment when we first moved to that city, that was our first apartment that we rent from his family to live in. And he tells me the good news as I had to tell him. Nobody was left. He was in hiding. And I say to him I would like to go to Sri Lanka to visit it. He says please don't do that because one of the guys which he told me, which was also a guy of our age, who lived through in hiding, the first day he came back towards Sri Lanka, he was shot dead and killed. Well, they didn't -- seeing us come back meant one thing, which I gave you to read about, the article. It meant one thing, returning the apartments or returning the homes or the buildings to the Jews. It was confiscated by their volition from the Germans and the Polish government, which it was established right after the war came to an end in that part which the Soviets liberated, they did not look into it about the Poles should return with a public property, of their own property, which it was unofficially taken by them. So they didn't want to give it up, so it was easier to kill the Jews who claimed that instead of giving up theirs. I understand as of late the rule changed a little because they tried at one time to -- a lot of them claimed the properties years afterwards when they came Poland. And the Polish government made a trick about it. Yeah, you didn't pay the taxes in so many years. So now, how much the tax would be to pay was more than the value of the house would be on the market. So that was another way, that way they did not have to return properties to Jews. I understand as of late right now, they changed that any public property -- like, for instance, a synagogue, a Jewish school, or the cemeteries or any lots of that nature that had belonged to the community as one, if they had claims to prove through legal means, they would return it back to the community. But they didn't have to return it back to any personal owner. But that's what they tried to do. Maybe it was another Yeshua imitation that you should back to Poland, so I listened to him, and didn't dare to go to the -- not to my birth town or to the home town that I lived from where I was chased out in 1939. And we decided -- I met somebody else who I knew in Baranovichi already from my home town, and he came asked me would I go with him for black marketing assignment. They used to go into Czechoslovakia. They used to go into Germany, bring certain things from there and get farm goods where they could be more available on this end and that's how it went on. And people were doing this here black marketeering quite freely at the time. There was no interference by any of the governments at that particular time because the public was in need of means. And the governments were not ready and able to help them restore. So they were happy that no one is making demands on them. Well, my wife heard that, she says, "No, you're not going." And I, you know, I did not want to separate myself, although the means would have helped us, you know. Another thing happened to me, my father-in-law brought me -- he gave me along to take along when I was escaping, to take a box of yeast. Yeast, they used to make moonshine and everything like that. And yeast was coming in a can at that particular time, was easily accessible, and was the means of getting money. When I came to the house where I met my friend, I had over there light flints and this here and it was stolen the first day. So I had a bad taste about being in -- so I said to

my wife, "We cannot go here. We cannot go there." We heard that Łódź is building up a Jewish community, and we heard a lot of people that we knew from were going to Łódź. So these days, it was very easy to decide, you get your stuff which you have, cover, or whatever it is that he was carrying around in knapsack like, and you go to Łódź. We came to Łódź, we found a lot of the former partisans which were there from same force as we were. And we found a lot more people from various cities. It was quite a big returning place, Jews from the camps and so on. That Jews survived in camps, I did not know until in Baranovichi when I worked for the KGB. That one day we were told that a train is passing by town on the way to Vilna and in it there were inmates from camps that survived the concentration camps. Only then, which it means in '45 of May, maybe about April or so, did I for the first time I went purposely to the station to see how these people looked. And that's the first time I saw the uniform with the stripes and I saw the faces of people who survived. Because to our own meaning we thought the Jews were murdered out the same as it happened in our areas. That there were massacres, and they killed them out. We had no idea of knowledge that there were such things as concentration camps. So it was the first time that I saw that in about April in Baranovichi, and then here coming to Białystok and Łódź, I found out the other parts of survivors in inmates in concentration camps.

Q: I'm curious what your reaction was to them, the people you met who had come from the camps, what you saw . . .

A: It was as much as if I was to be thrown into a different world altogether on a different part of the world. It was the most unbelievable thing for me and many more about me who came out of the forests or for hiding to see people surviving especially after I found out what the concentration camps were all about. You, for instance, until you read it, you didn't know about it either, but to us survivors, it was a new phenomenon. A new strange thing to find out. And it was some in all -- although I spoke to those people, it sounded a very unbelievable type of story, but that's what it was. And we did not even know how to treat it. You did not know. Do you feel better about it with these people that you met? Do you have any conversation? Because to go on and have conversation, we had nothing in common because that was not the way things happened at all. To go on our conversation that we did was again, strange people, what are you telling me about it? We have suffered; we were in camps, and you were killing and murdering and doing this here, like this here fighting the Germans. It was a strange story for them to believe, and it was as strange to us to believe their plight and their story.

Q: What were they like?

A: Well, you saw a lot of people who were on their way to one thing. Did not have the colors. Remember, some of the camp when I talk to you about May 1945, like the Soviets freed them in '44 or early part of '45. Between January of 1945 on the occupied part by the Soviets, all these camps were already liberated. You know, at that particular time, which we were there in a way of speech five months. So it still was traveling going on toward around Europe, and for documents, the Red Cross was very busy locating people. Getting them

together, helping them go to get passage to go back to their place from where they were taken and so on. So it was quite busy places, so in Łódź, since we brought some things with us, you know that now the yeast was stolen. The flints were stolen. We had to go -- so one morning, I says, "Let me go to the marketplace," because it used to be like flea markets right there. And people would bring whatever they want to sell, and at the same time for the things that they needed other came to buy. So I took -- we had some covers and so on, and I figured whatever it is, we don't need the covers any longer. And that would be the means for me to get some money. As I went to the market and I sold it and I'm on the way back to go back to the apartment where we were. And next to the apartment, how things could sometimes fall in line, there was guy from my wife's town from Chita, and he was a baker and he had a bakery there in Łódź. So one thing, if nothing else, we had bread. And he wouldn't take a nickel from us even for the bread. He was a dear friend of (sirens) . . . And he knew my wife's family quite well. So as I said, bread we had. Butter or any of the other things that we had to go to obtain. So I sold it, that put a little money in my pocket at that time some of the things you had. And while going, I take a look across the street from me. I see the same Major Spock on one of the streets going, and this is in Łódź. I almost felt in disbelief that I did not want to trust my eyesight, that I had seen him. I says would they send somebody after me so dearly? For what, what I worth to them? But I asked no questions. When I saw him, I didn't want to think of myself, that it's an oasis; I took it for real. Back then in Łódź, they have big doors that they close up for at night and everybody is in, so you can drive in. And they have a smaller doorway you can come through, and these big doors are just like it's the building is closed off. I backed into one of these here and on the back of me to wait for a little while to lose sight of the man, and through a different way I started walking back home. I came home and tell my wife what had happened, and she says to me, "What are you going to do?" I says, "I'm going to the organization." Understand, the organization of the partisans and Zionists' organization is being active, and people come to enlist themselves with them. Either those who want to go for Israel, it already became active. I says, "I cannot take chances to stay." She says, "Harold, we just heard yesterday through somebody" -- every day people were coming in -- that her father and her brother are trying to become over here. And we should stay in one place, so we can get together. The reason they couldn't go because his brother who was taken to the army from the forest was supposed to be discharged, and he let them know that he's coming back to Chita. So they were waiting, he was waiting for him. That's all he had left was one brother. And the family ties of those years were not like we know of ties today, so that held him off. So I told her, I says, "Make up your mind to remember who you want to wait for, your father or for me to take a risk." I says, "I will not take that risk, so let me go and get registered." And I went to where they registered and told them what it was all entailed. They immediately told me where to go to an address. It was at the edge of town and over there was a closed, and it was like an underground organization again, which it was a Zionist organization.

Q: Who did you register with?

A: That place -- I was told if you want to go and have passage to get somebody out to take care of you, go to this and this building and you'll find him. This kind of things went on all the

time. People wanted to run. People wanted to move. Legal ways to look was almost an impossible -- next to impossible. So I came over there to that building with my wife. They told us she cannot have no packages, so it was a good thing that didn't have mine because I sold it, other than what we had on our backs. And they told me that it's going to be a group of a hundred guys together. They all were Zionists, young Zionists. All people of my age and my wife's age. And it was meant, too, that we are going on the way to get into some countries that we'll be able to get passage to come to Israel. The first destination was Prague, Czechoslovakia. Over here, we were sent to the Red Cross and will make documents because it's to go through. And the Red Cross made us documents as we were inmates and wanting to come back home. From every country we could not go to same. For instance, you had to go through the Russian -- Russians were in Czechoslovakia, first of all important -- and we wanted to go over to the British side or the American side was much further. But the British side was closer; it was in Austria. In Austria, there were the Germans -- I mean, the Soviets, while in Austria were also the British. And that's what our aim was, so you had to say why do you want to go to Austria in Red Cross. Because at that particular time we acted that we are Austrian Jews. You know, it was make up by this -- you couldn't tell the right things because, otherwise, you did not know how about the KGB, is over here, too. So I became a man, same name -- because you didn't want to confuse the issues, but now I'm an Austrian Jew who is returning back home from the camps that I was freed. And that's how it was, the whole thing. In Prague when we came, the Red Cross had a station and we were given food, and we're given shelter, if anything wanted, and they helped us with providing transportation more. Our destination according now according to, you know, to the group every 10 people had a head man. I was made the head of the 10 guys who were with me. And then we had a main commander. Our destination from Czechoslovakia was to go Romania to Budapest. And how you get passage, we did not want to be seen a hundred people at one time, so we used to be in our group of the 10 and the other 10, and we used to communicate.

Q: You meant Bucharest, not Budapest?

A: No, I meant Budapest. Hungary.

Q: Hungary? Oh, I thought you said Romania.

A: Originally, excuse me. I must clarify that. Originally, we were supposed to go to Romania. At the last moment was changed to go to Budapest and get further notice. We came into that train and it was a packed train. There were nuns and Polish people of all sorts and who knows, maybe Czechs and everybody was traveling at that particular time. On the roof, the men of us went up on the roof, to make sure there was a place for the women. So the women were left sitting inside. The men were either on the platform or else they went up on the roof. On the roof there five of us, all former partisans. We supposedly don't understand Russian because otherwise would have been a bad deal. And these Russians were drunk and they are starting to talk amongst themselves that they are going to go downstairs to rape the women. And then to go ahead to steal, they would take baggages and everything like that. It's hard for

a person who hasn't lived through that era. Now, we had a quick decision to make. What do we do? How do I know that my woman is not going to get involved, or his woman, the other one or anything like that? We made a quick decision. We cannot let these two Russians go down. Since we were five of us there, we sort of split it, two, two, and one and then cover. To cover, they were three -- yeah, they were three, not two. And we figure when we come to a bridge while the train is traveling, we push that one guy to the right side, the other two to the left side, and the one comes back to help. And since they were drunk, we know we would have no problem. But it was again taking a risky chance, what we're trying to do. And sure enough, as we came to a bridge within a couple of minutes we got rid of these drunks. And now, we are driving, we couldn't wait till we get to Budapest because actually we are now we are fugitives. We pushed -- who knows whether they got killed or didn't get killed, but we couldn't allow ourselves to remain. Just maybe they will not, maybe they're just talking. You know, it's too serious a thing, and knowing that we are on a mission with all of these here things that we cannot tell the whole thing, what it's all about. And we came to Budapest. As soon we came, we were told to be to the Community Israeli there, which it means the Jewish Community. It was staged the first march of people to march to the consulate at that time and protest demanding the United Nations to grant Israel as a state, and we were the first people of that time to do it. And remember, it was under the control of the Soviets while the Soviets were not as evident to see. That's what it was -- the part not in Poland, not in Czechoslovakia, not in Hungary at that time were the Soviets as evident as when you went on the street. You know you saw a soldier here and there and the other, and whoever were their own people we did not know for the rest. And after that march, we were brought into the house, and over there they had them like bunk beds made up, and that was our place. They had a kitchen so it was sort of like a community type life setup, and that was done in the former school, the Hebrew school, near the temple. That's where they located us. Of all things being together, the same rabbi who gave us the marriage at that particular time, he was one in that group, too, with us. So they were sleeping underneath, and they were sleeping on the top. As things would have it, come by night when we were all sleep, something broke. I injured almost from that piece of wood that almost fell. It's only a sideline which it happened.

Q: Okay. Let's change tapes right now.

A: . . . some of this here that was going, so I said within a few days, we got our briefings and we had to make new documents now. Now, we are traveling to Austria with another pretext, and all of a sudden we were turned out to be right now Greek Jews that we are going to, you know, I mean, to look. Because we never wanted to tell the destination where we are going. It was they never questioned why do you go round about ways. Maybe you should have gone some other ways, they didn't ask the questions. And it all was done by the Red Cross and the Red Cross was just going along with our wishes, you know, at that particular time. So we had new documents now made. Everything is sealed, and they gave us to take along with us salami. Everybody had to take so much salami and other things because we were told that the food in Austria at the time was very critical, and especially there wasn't probably enough hunts for them to go out and get it. So while the means were in Austria, Austria was -

- I mean, in Budapest, in Hungary, the means of foodstuff and everything like that was easier. So all of us had to give so much, we had to turn it in to the kitchen when we come to Grozny. We were ordered that only in groups of three, no more than three people, we should pretend when we get off the train that we are people from the area. Not to draw any attention as stuff like this. People come off the train and they walked to their destination, we were given an outline of how to follow the streets, that was the streets, until we reached their hotel. We all knew that the hotel was in the center, there was another nearby, so there was no mistakes. And above all, which I didn't mention before, while traveling like this here sort of as illegals, we used to get linguistic speaking. For instance, when we left Poland to Czechoslovakia, and from Czechoslovakia to -- we were forbidden to speak any Russian at all. We converse in Hebrew. We could converse in Yiddish; in Polish, it's fine. But Russian, for one thing, no. Because we were supposedly going as inmates from concentration camps, and we had no reason to know Russian. Then we were, for instance, going now from Budapest to Grozny, you converse in Hebrew. He who doesn't speak Hebrew, speaks nothing, you know what I'm saying? Because we were as a different element it goes on, and all of that was briefed to like I say I was a headman of 10. So, in other words, you know what I mean, I was the leader of these 10 guys, and we all knew who the leader is, the main leader if any questions were.

Q: I have a question. The various instructions you got, going to Prague and then to Bucharest or Budapest and back to Grozny, did you get -- in each place, did you get a new set of instructions?

A: Absolutely. We didn't get all the instructions further than today, we are going from here to there. At the end of this destination, we got new instructions, so if somebody would have come to me and asked me, "Where are you going from Budapest?" I did not know until I was told it's not Bucharest, but it's Grozny, you see. And we finally came to Grozny, surrendered our food in the hotel, and then we had to beg for food later. I mean, why, what, where, no questions asked. It happens with organizations. When it becomes government organizations, it takes some of the normal ways -- it will never go, but that's what it was. In that hotel, I met up one guy who was with us in the forest. He was with Captain Davidoff (ph), if you heard me mention with the easterners, that he was serving there with him. And his wife and my wife and I, we knew them personally well, and somehow or other, we had our group of guys which it was partisans. We had some from our area, some other partisans were from an area called Valin (ph), which is the Ukraine, the western part of Ukraine which again was Poland before 1939. And we sort of everybody was linking with his own, sort of. And immediately we were taking sort of charge as the partisans' area. Hey, you need muscle guys? We are here and we are available and we have the means to do it and carry it out. So before long while we are going from Grozny, yeah from _____ then Grozny in the hotel, we were told nothing when you're leaving the hotel what -- nothing. What saw day by day that certain faces are no longer around. So I come over to this guy, I'll refer to him as Lusik (ph), that was his name. And I find out immediately, he tells me that he is a guide. He guides people how to cross the border. The aim of it, I to find out, is to cross over to the British zone, and this was still have to be so quietly done because it was still the Soviet zone

occupied in Austria in this part. Although later on, Grozny becomes, the Soviets retreat until they readjusted the borders. So he told me he's a guide. I says, "Hey, can you do anything for us? When are we going to leave? How long are we going to stay here?" And he said, "Don't rush. Nobody's going to remain. Everybody's going to sent out." And it sort of was very strange, but, you know, you put two and two together you get to understand. The guys with money paid off and they were -- so he was telling me he was taken through the Elk Mountains to cross over. All of a sudden, I was summoned in the office to come in. They say, "Harold, tomorrow 12 guys, all of the partisans male and female, you're going to get a direction where to go. You're going to go across." We was supposed to from there take the train to Klagenfurt (ph). From Klagenfurt, we were supposed to come to the way near the river. The river was the Mur. The Mur River is a narrow river, but a fast flowing river. And we made a decision that we are going to form like a chain. One swimmer, one no swimmer. One swimmer, one no swimmer. And I was leading the chain this here the 10 of us actually in a way by the time we stretch were almost, but not too far would we stand on this end of the water to the other. But in order to hold as I'm starting to enter with my chain already linked up, a galloping horse with a Soviet, "Halt." And they saying halt in German, then in Russian "Stoi." In other words stand still, halt. And the first thing he's starting to ask, "Who is the leader?" "We don't have no leader." "Where are you going?" "We're trying to go on the other side of the river to go over there. We're going to visit relatives, so that's our shortcut." He picks me, he says, "The rest of you stay here. You come with me." Comes with him. What do you think, I was arrested. So I figure now, I run a half of Europe over away, and here I'm being arrested by the Soviets. Knowing their scheme of things and everything like that, I figure ultimately they got me and now they'll have a good right to charge me for desertion. My wife realizing what it is, and I say my words to her. I says, "Please, you have to have somebody go back to Grozny. They must come and bail me out. You know, the situation; we cannot wait days." So immediately as soon they arrest them, so two guys went to board a train and they came back to Grozny, and they started tending on the table. To make a long story about two mile, they were from Grozny, back with money and I was bailed out. Now, where do we go? We come back to Grozny to the hotel. Now, I come to the office and I get my group together. I says, "You know, we are partisans, right? Don't dare try to ask us to fight because we'll make a fight here to no matter what it costs. If it means to destroy the hotel, we'll destroy it." I says, "My group is going to be sent and you see you have Lusik, he is the guide; he is going to take it." "But, Baba, you cannot do it." I says, "Okay. I have men stationed at all the exits already, two men." I says, "If you want to declare war, we'll make it war right away." So I says, "My ultimatum is not to be changed." I says, "The first group going out of here today is going to be my group. Whatever more you have, I am not interested. I cannot let myself to be chances." I says, "I was bailed out this time, I don't know what the next time will be." And I got Lusik to my side. I says, "You heard what I said, huh? And believe me, I mean it. I'm not going to deviate." Okay, it's settled, and they say Lusik and his wife, "You and Sonja come to be with us." And they tell us we're going to go into a barn. The barn is on the zone border. The Russians are going to try to search in this here. If you don't hide well enough anything they'll take away. They were looking for anything, _____, gold, rings, whatever it is. They were plain robbing, and we were paying them off anyways. The guide used to give them -- let's assume if he give them some money

or Vodka, for a bottle of Vodka, you did a lot of things. And if you heard it said, it's not just said, it was a true fact. But I was standing -- my wife at that time had a ring, other things. So she did it in the old plan. We had, you know, from knitting yarn, so she made a ball of yarn out of it, and whatever we wanted to hide, we put it on the inside. And with the needle, you know what I mean, so it looks very innocent that you know in the midst of starting to knit something, and that's how we got. We did not have that much to hide to begin with, but some guys in the group -- not in my group so much as the other -- were people who had money, you know what I mean, that they had -- how they got it, speculating my things it's none of my business what they had. And now we came in there, we were one, two, three that the Russians, and the rest of the group were on the other side of the barn. And there within a few hundred feet or so we were on British territory. Instructions were given to us that we must walk very quietly because we are going to enter a British camp. And that British camp was a part of the United Nation camps, and they are going to separate us, so prepare yourself. The British office ran their camps like that. The men separate, and the women separate. That's still the old British ways. So here we got in our midst some guys, coming in New York, I knew them quite well. And those people started yelling, and I asked them please behave. You were told it's the English zone, we must enter quietly, and we must not yell. What are you doing? Looks Sheila's hiding some stuff, maybe gold or who knows from him, and she remained behind. And they're making yelling noise. And I asked them to please stop, they didn't. I and two more guys grabbed the man by his hand and the other guy with the other -- we carried them in inside. There was a warm stove, we put them under the stove. After that the group of guys saw that here's a bunch of rebels, which it was the partisans and each time each one of us would look back, we would be looked sideways, you know what I'm saying. And all of a sudden, it became quiet. We were in that camp for about two days, and one night we were told to get ready because pick-up time is going to be tonight. The Fifth Army, which it was the British Army stationed there on the border of Austria and Italy, they had a big group from the Israelis, or at that particular time, call them Palestinian Jews who were serving in the Fifth Army and that was supported by them. So they are the ones who were helping us, in other words, getting into Italy from there. And this is what it was, it was bringing in from one type of camp to another international United Nation camps in exchange. But this is how the root was all worked out to bring people, you know, to each their destination, Palestine. They picked us up on that truck and brought us to their camp where they were already on the Italian side. Clovishia (ph) was the name of the big city nearby. And for the first time we sat down over there to eat at tables, and, you know, the looks of challah, they served us challah. We couldn't get it over, sort of we are used to before the war challah was served on a Saturday, Friday. But here in the middle of the day, you know what I mean, weak challah and the food they served up, it was out of this world. We were led in to take showers and clean up. It was just like somebody opened up the doors to a new world in existence that we did not know existed. From there they took us into Bologna. In Bologna, we were let to go in to join the international camps, which they were the Armra (ph), if you've heard about it. They were supported. In that, of course, they deloused us, excuse me for saying, and everything like that. And we were waiting for assignment of where, but it was warm in Italy in that part at that time of year. So literally in a park, we were just with bundles on our back, whichever one had something to cover himself to sleep on and

we were on the streets. The next day that we were there in Bologna in that place in that camp, rather, 5,000 armed trucks were brought in which they were survivors of the Mauthausen camps. Among all these people in the camps, my wife recognized an uncle of hers, his brother. We were last thing -- he was living in Slonim, not in the same town at that time because that's where he got married. He was living there. So now we begin to see literally face-to-face survivors from concentration camps and at this moment on the way it happened that as soon he got registered, we kept ourselves together. We made like a family. Now, we are a family of three, and our next destination from there was Verona. From Bologna, we were sent to Verona.

Q: Well, these people were really fresh out of camp.

A: Yeah.

Q: This was not five months after the fact.

A: They were just brought from Mauthausen.

Q: What were they like?

A: There wasn't one of them who looked normal. When I mean "normal," one was swollen. One was almost dying, you know what I'm saying, and one had more strength than the other. And it just was a matter of how badly you were damaged while being there before the Americans picked them up. Because remember, Mauthausen was -- and Buchenwald and all of this here were liberated by the American Army, and that was the zone -- you know, it was zones divided at that time. In Italy, for instance, there were the British, the Polish Army, there was also the American Army.

Q: What was the reaction in you and your wife, when you met these people?

A: The reaction would be just like you come to a museum in a wax museum, and you see faces. And you almost pretend you see a living beings. That's what the people appeared to us in the first day. Within a short while, the picture changed to the better because those who needed help, hospitalization or whatever it is, were hospitalized. We kept ourselves with the uncle of my wife right there, and he didn't step away from us and we didn't from him. And our next destination was not so much where the camp wanted to send us to, but our leader which wanted us to be transferred was to Modena. And in Modena they gave us where it was a military academy before, they gave us that academy to make houses. And all these people, we were together over 6,000 people a group, all coming there, that was territory of the Americans. So mind you, within a few feet away from us there were a camp from German prisoner of wars. And since we were brought there, every day started, you know, throwing with bottles, throwing with rocks. Just the face to look of these Germans. Of course, the MPs did not want a bit about it, and we started to say to the MPs, "Either you relocate us, or you relocate them. We cannot stand and be idle or do nothing like this here looking at yesterday's

Nazis who they did what they did to us." And what they did, they kept us in that camp and they relocated. Within one day they emptied out the POW camp, and they took them away to another place. And the military academy became ours, and life in that military academy, what can I tell you, it was on the floor. Wherever there was room you saw people. At night it was used to ensue fights because one would step on each other going through. So it was another way of being in a camp. To us who were in the partisans who didn't go through that type of camps, it was a new way of life. We had a small room. In that small room, let's see, there was I with my wife. There was another couple, I have even some pictures if -- you know what I mean, from there if you sometimes will be interested, I'll let you make copies of that. So they were telling -- that place over there in a single room, we were more than three families. I mean, there singles, a few guys and there was another family who -- she comes here in the wintertime. Her husband is no longer alive. And they were with us in that room in Modena. And it was mixed children, I mean if you joined the administration, they made an administration. So they came under the administration. And for the first time I had the opportunity to see a young lady from Britain coming in the name of, again, Jewish Tradition Committee (ph). The American joined and they came to the administration trying to find out what kind of help that they can provide. And we tried to tell them where do want to start? Do you need blankets? I says, "Of course, we need blankets." Do you need this -- my demand to them was at that time they must get the children out of this camp firsthand. Within a few days, since in Italy sex for money was available, some youngsters, yesterday's survivors from the camps, wound up with venereal diseases. And we realized that mixture and makeup of women who were married and women maybe who were pregnant and young children, you take this young child of 15 or 16 who survived the camp, that kid cannot be easily told by somebody what to do. And they listened to us, I even have a picture to show it, where one day they took all the youngsters out and they took them away to another place making a kibbutz really. But that was a place where the youngsters were taken out and those who were venereal stricken with venereal disease had to be, of course, hospitalized. But it was a new story of my life to live in a camp which I did not want the best of it to take, you know what I mean, but you had to do the best under the administration.

Q: How long were you in this camp?

A: Literally, we were a few months in there because of the ensuing thing. As in now had started because they wanted to have leadership to know to go on. We knew there would be forthcoming more of the refugees. And I at that time was transferred to Milano. Near Milano in Italy we had on a farm area over there, that it was an official seminar, my wife went with me. And we had various speakers because it was a big political issue in Israel. While they wanted to save as many to get to Israel, it was at that time who and on which side will these people join? Are they going to join the Jabotinsky side, or are they going to go with the Ben Gurion side? And with the Israelis it was immediately, number one, and that's what it started. That seminar started to teach us, us the future _____, the leaders, because I became a leader and a kibbutz. That was my best way of working my way out from the camp, you know what I mean. Meanwhile I was assigned a place, and that was a training place. We started -- it was on a farm area. We started to teach people how to ride on tractors, how to do

farm work, while we provided this farm work for free. But it gave us a place of starting of how to prepare until they would come with a truck and pick so many of them up, and they were ready illegally to be shipped out by boat or other ways to destination Palestine.

Q: Did Anwar let you do this or they didn't know about it?

A: The Anwar could not know anything about it at all. The old Anwar was given support in the camps. Outside of the camps, we in many instances was the only support whatsoever. I did not get back in support until I come back later in the story to Florence when my wife became pregnant.

Q: And so you were able to move in and out of these camps as you could?

A: Oh, yeah. It was you take care of your _____ what you can. The only thing you sign, which they made us sign is that nobody is going to go to get a job. It was forbidden for any of the refugees or the displaced persons in these camps, that's what the international organization guaranteed them. Because we were so hungry for things, we would probably do the same thing as it went on in Asia and everything like that. Work for next to nothing and ruin Italian workers because of that. So that agreement was made available to us that we cannot go to look jobs. The only thing our guys started to do, they started black marketeering. And, you know, like those flea market you know to be in this country, you find a lot of flea markets in European countries. And flea markets is how to control, people don't buy license, you know what I'm saying. And that's what the way was with some, and some of them were arrested by the Italian government for doing, because I once -- I'll tell you the story later. Once I got in touch with family here, my relatives rather, they used to send me packages. And cigarettes was the best thing they're demanding for me to get. Not because of my habit of smoking, because cigarettes were like dollars in the bank. To sell a carton of cigarettes was nothing, you know what I mean, it was the easiest to do. And it is money, the food was available in all sorts. But we were getting support through the international organization, and our people unfortunately did not know how to use it. You talk to these people about oatmeal, oatmeal in Europe until we came to Italy was not made as oatmeal flakes. But in the United States, that was the means so these people were used to if you want to make oatmeal soup, you had the kernels; you don't have this here. So what was the place, we used to take things like this to the marketplace and sell. They would give us condensed milk, you know. What do we do with condensed milk? Nobody now who were in those countries knew of a such a thing as condensed milk. Milk comes from a cow, and that's what you know about it. But there is no such thing. Powdered milk we knew because the Soviets used powdered, you know, soups and so on. Did you have anything here to ask me at this point?

Q: Well, I tell you, we don't have too much time left on the tape, do we? We need to change the tape; then we'll go on.

A: Okay.

End of Tape #4

Tape #5

A: So as I aforementioned, I was working with the camp administration in Modena, Italy. I worked for a while, and became very, very disgusted since help was not forthcoming so soon. The only good part for me to remember about Modena with the American soldiers being there because in my worst way, I wanted to communicate now with United States to tell a sister to my mother, my aunt -- she's still alive. She's in a home here. I just visit her yesterday, as a matter of fact. And she had a letter in her possession which I knew that my mother was pleading her that she should save me and see to make papers like would come to the United States. She filled out her wishes before the war in 1939, and I believe I aforementioned it in part that I was awaiting my passage in September, but Hitler disrupted me by declaration -- not the undeclared war in September, when it broke up. So all I remained now is we just had past story to tell about it. And I wanted at this time not just to look for relatives, but to tell them where I am. That was impossible to send out from Modena at that time mail. The mail was still being organized. Remember we are talking about the late part in May, and I'm talking maybe perhaps right now in June of 1945. Where everything was just unfolding with the end of World War II, and a lot of it started sort of a new life again. So while the soldiers used to come to camp be from the MP and the others, and American boys, soldiers that had cameras, they were very curious about us. And finding out that we were the survivors and what it was, so they would come, get involved in conversation. And one day, I find a soldier and I take a look by his looks, I says, "Are you Jewish?" I didn't speak English, I spoke Italian already at that time, and I spoke Yiddish with him. So he says to me, "Yes," in Yiddish. I says now that's the perfect man I want to. I says, "I want from you one thing. To get in touch with an aunt of mine that she lives in Chicago." "Chicago? Oh, I come from Chicago." And I tell him the address. I remembered that address by heart, because that was the way in Europe it was to continue into knowledge. I used to -- my mother used to make write a few sentences to my aunt, and, therefore -- and write the address. So this was the aunt, she was a favorite of mine as a child. And therefore for writing for so many times, I remembered 4455 North Drake Avenue, Chicago by heart. Did not have a zip code in those years, but the rest of it, I knew. So I said to his soldier, I says, "Please, I bet you I drove my aunt nuts by now because somebody would go to Moscow, I would tell them here's the address. Drop in the mail and say it, 'Your sister's oldest son, Harold, is alive.'" Somebody here would go to Carmos (ph), whatever it is. So she got all this here over here, and she almost went out of her cotton-picking mind. What am I doing? So when I got this soldier, I say to her, I says, "I hope she received, tell her, all my messages from before. Tell her I'm in this camp. You know how to describe the address. You know it's the military academy of Modena. And maybe you would let me use your mail until the post office will be established that I can maintain a correspondence with her." He says, "Oh, they'll be no problem." I gave him my name and I referred to, you know what I mean, the way it was and tried to tell her, I wrote to her in Yiddish because I knew that the best way. So I says she can put it in it, and I told her in short, I says who I am and I'm the only one who survived, remained alive. I'm right now in Italy in Modena and through the help of an American Jewish soldier, I was able to mail it to you. It took about maybe two weeks or three weeks, and I got -- because the post for the army was going fast. It was not as it was for civilian. I

got -- he brought me a response and an answer that she got it all and now she wants to know -- now she's starting lecture me. Which, God bless her, that's what she used to do. She says, "Harold, if you're single, stay single. If you're married, try not to have any children. But let us get in touch closer, we'll see to make papers to bring you." At that particular time, it sounded like remote, even to us. And here I had to go ahead to have sort of a correspondence misunderstanding with her. I'm not ready to come to America, I say at that time, I want to go to Israel. And she kept on pleading I was full of flame and fire, but going to Palestine. And here I'm trying to get to her not to make papers for me. So I tried to say I cannot ask you to make papers yet at this time, but I'll keep it in mind. When I'm settled, I'm going to let you know. In the meanwhile, whatever you want to help me otherwise, and I don't tell her in this first letter that I'm married and I'm in this, that and the other. I did not want to write too much on a piece of paper somebody, you know what I mean, lets me use his mail. So in this letter when I got to read it, you can imagine how my wife felt at that particular time. Don't get married; don't have children. Little did I know that a little while later in about six months later, we'll find out that my wife is pregnant, too. And that was peace at that time. That's why she made -- three times she made papers until she made the proper papers. While she didn't want to listen to me, she made papers for me as a single person. When she got more letters that I'm married, so now she started to make in two names because we didn't tell her that my wife is pregnant. Why tell her? It was a remote thing we did not know. So then she had to make the third time the papers when my daughter was born and she was born in Florence. So all in all, from Modena, I sought to join a seminar now for leadership seminar, which it was created at that time. And we had speakers from us one very outstanding Professor Garfinkel, which he became my idol for a while. And at that particular time, we were with mixed emotions. How do we train in the kibbutz these illegals when they come there? Everybody wanted them to be on their party, but it was not a one-way party who was helping the DPs at that time. Both parties were helping, and you had speakers on both sides to do.

Q: You're talking about what you mentioned before, the Jabotinsky, versus the . . .

A: Correct. The _____. In other words, both sides wanted to hunt new blood. You know, they were actually hunting for new memberships and affiliations. I'll never forget one of the speeches, it was so many years later by Professor Garfinkel. And I tried to ask a lot of people that question when it was posed, and nobody could answer it. What does terror mean? And a lot of people lose themselves to answer the question. His idealism as a professor speaking to us, which he used, terror is an expression by a strong -- like he brought out Germany, like he brought out the Soviet Union -- who has nothing to lose and he can get involved in terror. Terror is also a means by someone who cannot lost anymore either because he has nowhere to go, so it's as a last resort. So he tried to say in his speech, Professor Garfinkel at that time, that Israel at this time is not in a way that she has a lot to lose. So, therefore, by going to go ahead and extend terror at that particular time, we may lose what we achieved. So, therefore, we should go ahead and train our people who go to Israel that they should join the left, _____, the Labor Party, which they were anti-terrorists instead of joining the right, which it was the Jabotinsky people who were pro-terror, that was their way of driving the British out and free the land. As we all know the outcome in 1948 after big maneuvers and

everything like that, Israel was granted statehood. Well, all through this time we had a big problem as of to prepare the newcomers to Israel that they should be aware of what's going on at least on both ends and let them make an intelligence like that. So every time while I gained at that time leadership to become a leader for my kibbutz, and that kibbutz was not too far from Modena. I successfully sent away from there a few groups, that they were trained and the training meant in a way almost brainwashing. Tell them what's going on while teaching him certain trades, and being the kibbutz was always meant to do something and in a grand way. And since we made a kibbutz to be near farms, so it was good for us that we were away from the city. We could do more things that we wanted to do while the city, the government would not allow us for these here things. And this is the way a network was set up of people to be sent illegally to bypass the British, because the British white paper came out at that time which forbade for the Jews even as the DPs to come legally to Israel. So that's what had stopped a lot of escaping before the war broke out, and that's what had stopped afterwards. But by hook or by crook, illegals were available. These same people who faced the war and faced all its tribulation were ready to go back to Israel under all circumstances possible, and a lot of them did give their life right there in the first battles that ensued before Israel became a state. Others survived and they remained Israeli citizens and provided a good home for themselves and for their offsprings. But the fact remains that these people that after going through all the agony of war, being in the camps, us, the partisans from the forest, did not stop to say enough is enough. But they still were willing to give their given years what they had with them to go to fight for a cause. So again, we became new soldiers to go out and fight for Israel at this time, and no longer for our personal things ourselves and that was all about. I did successfully have a few kibbutz and any time I ask my superiors when is my turn to go, "No, we still need you. We still need you." They kept on knocking it down. "You get legal passage to Israel and you'll get it." One day I come and I have the new good news to break to them. I used to come to Rome or Milano, and we were near Milano, Milano was our point. And I tried to tell them, "I have good news and bad news. I said the good news is that I'm going to become a father. The bad news is I'm on the road, how can I go ahead to do this here?" And I did one thing which I want to admit to myself at that time again, a personal thing. When I found out that my wife is pregnant, I took time off. We knew that in Italy, there was some of the doctors from our forest that were with us. And there were two doctors over there, Rockover (ph) and Mastniq (ph) which that's how he was he called. They both were surgeons, they saved a lot of lives during the war. And that was in Venice or Venezia, the way it's called in Italian. They were living in a hotel. I took my wife and made a trip to Venice, ready to do an abortion. I'm glad she's not present, she doesn't like for me to talk about it. And we knew that it was done, just like in the forest. Dr. Mastniq, as a matter of fact, died here a couple of years ago in Florida. He says, "Yes, we are doing it, Harold, but we won't do it to you." I says, "Why? Please, I cannot afford to have a child right now." He says, "First, yet you cannot afford for your wife to have an abortion." I says, "Why?" He says, "Look, there's a chance if we abort the first time that she may not be able to bear children. You will not be happy not to have a family." And I stopped begging him, I understood it. And we both went home brokenhearted which later on in years in New York when I used to come to visit my father-in-law in the summer months with the grandchildren, and one day I go to my father-in-law, he says, "I'm going to say hello to Dr.

Mesnick (ph)." I come into there and I show him my daughter. He said to me, "Is that what you tried to destroy?" I begged him not to talk about it because I did not want my daughter even to know. She was too young even to be talked about a subject like this here at the time. But it was sort of how much all the agony I could get, I even got it from this part, too, in the right way, and it was -- I was a joyful person after that. Seeing that there is life and we got the rebuilding to do. The only thing we had to stop at second child. My son was born in Chicago; it was due to both children my wife had to have two Cesarean sections. And the birth of daughter in Florence, Italy was a hard story to tell him. So he gave me the same doctor, Manonovich (ph) was his name, he was also a refugee who survived from Greece, the camps. And he gave me a letter when I told him we are going to America, and he says, "Please, don't have her suffer. When you come to America, give that letter to a doctor. So if your wife gets pregnant again, let her not go through with her pain." And little did I realize that the same Cesarean section with my wife, by 5 o'clock in the afternoon, she got up, put her lipstick on, and it was, again -- in Italy, she was in a Catholic hospital, the maternita. She was in the hospital for a whole month. And talking the way people were nice to us, especially the Italians, they immediately understood that I was Jewish. Most likely, I'm kosher; they did not serve any kosher food. They couldn't bring it in. Because I gave them the chocolates that I used to, Nestle's and Hershey that my relatives used to send me and the cigarettes, they permitted me, first of all, to have a bed in the hospital so I could be with my wife all the time. I could bring in food from the outside like chicken, and they permitted me to set up there that I could cook for her soup and a piece of chicken. So she had her means. So it's undescrivable to see it, it was a Catholic church, but Italians were very gracious to the displaced persons who came there after the war. And I thought I want to bring that out whenever I have an opportunity to tell about it and I just did. So when I came telling them that, they said, "Well, wait. You can still be working." A few months later, my wife at that time must have gone into the eight months or so. They say to me, "Now, with your group, you're going to be taken." I says, "I with my group? No, I'm not risking two lives. My group could be sent," and I says, "I want to be -- from now on, I'm going to go to Florence." Florence, Italy was kept through the United Nations and all the other organizations as a place for the sick and the pregnant. In there we had the facilities and the Jewish community in Florence was very supportive about it to oversee as to find us villas and so on. And they would give us a lot of voluntary help to go on, so that we had a clinic there where a doctor were on the premises all the time. And the pregnant women, as understandable, were an important issue at the time. We saw so much destruction and we wanted to see a fulfillment of replenishment. So we were under good car, so if anybody was pregnant and they wanted to be in Florence, it was an open city, like send them there. Then we turned back into the United Nations, to Anwar, they used to get each month so much money, which individually we couldn't live on it. But while we were living like in a kibbutz, we could provide it. I went back to a kibbutz, but this kibbutz were really of people who were not going to Israel, but they were waiting for passage to any other country that would accept them. And the majority did register to go, like I at that particular time registered to go the United States. And we used to take, all of us, put in the money to sort of like a family, you know, together. Everybody would get certain things we would sell because we could not adhere ourselves to the Italian foods. Spaghetti was a new issue to us. Polish people don't eat spaghetti; they eat

other foods, but not spaghetti. The only thing in pasta we knew was, you know, to make other things, but not spaghetti. So it was a new diet and it was new things. So we used to have everybody served in the kitchen, woman or man took their turn. And which we used to have a collective kitchen, and we would sit down in the dining room. And we were culturally -- which I have pictures to prove that whatever we wore. We did not just seen to come there and just have our meal, and we were creative in the same way. And I awaited passage until I left. Let's see, in 1948 in February, I got passage, and that's when I came to New York.

Q: Now, this what you were calling it kibbutz was in the Florence area, right? It wasn't a park?

A: No, that one I say I joined it, again, it was the form of a kibbutz created on another kibbutz like, well, like it was in the . . .

Q: Collective living arrangement?

A: Correct. It was a collective living type. And we referred to them -- you know, which I have the pictures. I will show them to you, which we called it a kibbutz. Kibbutz Alvet, which we called it, which it was a part of the labor movement in Israel and it was culturally when on. But we worked it in means of a kibbutz that way, that we would share the responsibility together. We would all work together for all things that needed to be done. So it needed to be done cleaning, our own people did the cleaning and cooking.

Q: What about religion there?

A: Okay. We had found over there room enough in the villa that we were living to make like a synagogue inside of it. And believe it not, one year for the High Holidays when I was the one who was doing the pray conducting, the prayers as a cantor. And right up to the holidays when I got the visa, everybody was joking, saying, "You see, you prayed well. It immediately worked." So . . .

Q: Did that feel good about it, to be able to be a Jew again?

A: It felt more than good, because like I say understanding that _____, which means I believe and being Jewish, this was the biggest expression by the survivors to give. Much more than any Jew any part in the world who did not through Hitler. Because we were the ones that when we came back and say we believe, that we don't come back with sort of blaming God for what had happened. But the majority was when we come the conclusion that we always ask so where was man? Why look for the invisible? Why look to the thing that we don't know who and where? But we do know where man is. We do know that man did not care including the United States did not give a helping hand to stop. They did not open their doors for immigration. We know the facts that even the St. Clures (ph) when they docked which it was a movie made, "The Voyage of the Damned." And a few among the people could not be saved even to let into the United States. So you can understand that any one of us who wanted to return back to Jewish life, who wanted to start praying again did a

big issue with himself that we justified ourselves and we turned our anger, not to God, but our anger returned to man. And any time whenever I wrote something about it or I spoke, I still ask the same question. So where was man in those days? And I still feel justified with my question. Not to ask where God was or where God is or what did God do, I would not want to find out that there is a God who really tried to have us punished because of something we did wrong. Because I believe that God is referred to me as a father. God is referred to me as a person who loves me as a father, and, therefore, this type of god cannot go ahead to ask that I should be killed, murdered, maimed, all of these here things for disobedience. A father does not ask for that. A father does not even want to surrender his child for something little bit he did to community. So when you say the return back to believe was easy perhaps at once, but you felt something is missing in our life that we survived. And I believe religion was one of the basic things that we sought and we found ourselves in. I have a lot about any results saying in many instances, but I don't want to -- this is not the place.

Q: How much time do we have on this tape left?

Videographer: We've got about five minutes, but I need to stop.

A: Red light.

Q: Sure if you guys are. Everything's on?

A: I see red lights. Is that supposed to be the red lights?

Videographer: Yeah, we're rolling.

A: No, I'm not.

Q: I think when we stopped, you were talking about religion, and that you didn't -- you blame mankind, but your experiences didn't make you resentful of being Jewish. Is that what you . . .

A: I wanted to make a point, and I'll read already it one more time. I said God is invisible to us. We don't know where he is or what he is, but it's part of our belief. That is, the _____, I believe. What I believe in something really that other than created by man afterwards that we don't have a way of following the Moses or the things like that. But the Holocaust, per se, I do not want to make that a God issue, that God punished the Jews, that's why it happened or any other ways. I rather would turn to the things that is visible to us. Man is visible to us. We know, the mere fact that Germany, being the most cultural place of Europe at the time it happened could produce such an evil man as Adolph Hitler. And there wasn't enough, after all the tries that they tried to get rid of him, to rise up against him and destroy him. After what he did to Germany besides what he do in the process to so many millions of non-Jews as well as the six million Jews who he was having a war against the

Jews. So that's my interpretation. I cannot see the Holocaust in any other way or form as the war against the Jews because at any time, the preparation legally he got them through Nuremberg to make everything legal what he did afterwards. Which I mean at this time, the humanization program, the right of taking away from all of them that they're not even humans; they're subhumans. And, therefore, he prepared it so that the people should not feel that they're doing an injustice, but the people are getting rid of a menace or something, it's not so. So when man let one person, one person's religion, if you -- I want to call it a religion, because he believed in it, in Nazism -- go as far as it was worded to let destroy people and destroy their offspring and so on. How can I turn to ask for -- to look for the invisible or the person that I cannot speak personally or ask him questions? This is why my conviction past World War II, past the Holocaust, remains that believing in the invisible, believing in the Jewish theology, believing in all the creation, that this did is something worth analyzing again, and it's something worth living. And I remain Jewish, that's a fact. I almost tried to get away with it as I told in my chapter. And I'm happy till this day with the conviction I made not to work against the tide, but to go with the tide. And I feel very comfortably today that I do not ask the Almighty what he did.

Q: During the war years, was religion at all important to you? Was it a source of strength? Did you resent it? Did you think about it?

A: Perhaps it's hard for you to memorize what we did earlier, but I did tell you in the most horrendous days of my life being in the ghetto, that I was exposed and be with a brother to my father and he was a rabbi. And I have told you the way he was speaking to me, that we must go on and doing it because in the 14th century with the _____, God had so much faith in the Jewish people that he could put them to an exposure like he did, and he had the faith in them that they will not convert for the sake of remaining living people. But much rather they were strong enough to say no. Do you want to be Jewish? And they remained Jewish. And, you see, the fleeing rabbis felt so distasteful with the trying to enforce on them that they threw on, as we call it, a herem. A herem means forbidden. That it was forbidden for Jews to return back to Spain, even after the change of government and rather because it was off limits sort of to speak as in modern language we would say for Jewish to continue alive over there.

Q: But I understand. I remember your telling me about your uncle.

A: Yes.

Q: But how did that lesson carry with you while you were fighting in the forest?

A: Well, when I was fighting in the forest, to me he was already gone. I don't know, he was taken to another city. In Slonim ghetto, they sort of had a hospital. He was . . .

Q: Not your uncle, but how did the religion message affect you while you were fighting?

A: Okay. Firstly, let's remember what I said to you in the other words.

Q: Let me just ask you one favor. Try not to refer to what you've already told me.

A: Okay.

Q: Pretend this is the first time you've told me.

A: Okay, all right. Being the fact that I was in a Soviet underground, for me to think religiously could have been a bad way about it because religion was a no-no in the Soviet system. So even in the forest, we had the politicians come back to us when the paratroopers showed up and the whole idea of brainwashing restarted again. So for me to think at that time religiously would have been the biggest crime I could have done after to myself, speaking in the first undertone. Now, in my inner sanctum, did I think of religion? I used to look at the stars at night. Being around and doing something and seeing the moon shining, and I would sometimes say, "God, can't you do something for me?" So to answer whether I totally dissipated or got away from that, no. That little spark was in me. And I remember when I went out of that ghetto going to the forest, a prayer went up to me. No more like when Jacob ran away from his brother, Esau. And he sort of tried to make a contract with God. Say, "If you save me, I will be your servant for all the duration of my life." That night, with moon and the stars my witnesses, that's what my prayer was. And maybe he listened. But I did survive, but I didn't survive to fail him; I survived to go on, and I will go on like that. I feel comfortable to bring Jewishness and religion into my house and through my family I have been a member of a synagogue all through the years being in America, even at times it was hard financially to do so. So on that question I must say I feel good about it, without asking the questions. To me, it feels the same thing as if a young person gets killed. It's a pain, but you don't keep on brooding on it for all your life. When you're reminded, you feel the pain again. But you try to go with your life without brooding on it all the time. That's the best answer I can give when it comes to the religious during the war and especially after the war. I'm happy that there are still Jews in this world who want to go on and live as Jews.

Q: In your writings, you came up with a theme, "Torn Between Tyrants."

A: "Torn Between Tyrants."

Q: What does that mean?

A: In my life as a youngster on through coming to the United States, I stumbled every time on a tyrant. Be the tyrannical part of Hitler, be the tyrannical part that I've seen before Hitler invaded Poland that I've seen from the Nationalist Party, be it the time when I used to go to school and rocks was thrown at me by children who lived in the neighborhood. Not because I did anything to them, but it was always that one answer, you are a Jew. And it sort of became a theology, being a Jew means you got to pay in any kind of way. So even rocks thrown at you means part of you because it's not thrown at you because you are Harold; it's

thrown because the Jewish -- you are a Jew. So I cannot help it but go on in the way I'm doing. It looks like it's over. You're ready?

Q: You were talking about how you were always castigated for being a Jew, torn between tyrants.

A: This is one part I tried to bring out. I, for instance, always had to challenge a tyrant. To me, the tyrant was when I remember one day during the war when I was with my grandfather from my mother's side. And it was a debate at that time whether I shouldn't be let go to Vilna, so in Vilna I could meet up with the American Counsel, I can perhaps go to the United States. At that particular time, my father would not permit me to go on my own, so he says, "See if your grandfather, after all, he's got all his children there, if your grandfather will take you to go with him, then you can go. Otherwise, I will not permit it." And that was the decision making that we had to take out a passport because the law came out whoever wants to stay here in the Soviet Union must obtain a passport. That's the rule of the land. Those people who do not wish to take out passport can return back to Germany which it was sort of a critical kind of way. And there was some who did not wish to remain under Communist regime, and they went and signed up to go back to Germany -- to the occupied Poland under Germany. And the fortunate thing that had happened at a later time was an unfortunate thing it happened then. The KGB rounded them up by night on trucks and loaded them into trains, and to Siberia they went. Those people survived the whole war. Some of them were drafted to the army, they were of age. Otherwise, they could join later on into the Polish Army that Stalin created into. And so a bad thing of yesterday became a good thing for tomorrow, but at the time there was a tyrannical thought and a tyrannical thing that I grew up with. And when I and my grandfather together went in to have a passport, the captain and the police started yelling it "How come" -- he didn't ask a question why you didn't come any earlier and stuff like that. But in a blistering voice he sort of dared to speak so loud to my grandfather, which my grandfather still had the beard. He always had the beard long enough to remind me of Casimir, The Great, one of the Polish kings that were in existence. And I always used to refer to him, in jokingly speaking, which he wouldn't tolerate that, of course. So again, even a little item like that over why we were late and I come and making the passport. I couldn't tell him I wanted to escape to go to Vilna maybe wind up in America, that would be the wrong thing. So I saw sort of tyranny in the workings. Afterwards when I decided to be a good boy through school and I volunteered to go to do certain jobs, and I started believing that working make a person better and everything like that, I volunteered to go to work on the factory level. It was near Bialystok where they were building housings for the military at that particular time. I was a frail, in a way of speech, young guy who never did do hard labor work. The hardest thing in labor I did was sawing, chopping wood or sawing that thing for the purpose. Being a Zionist, it used to be a summer type of chore that you wanted to go help them. The money that we were paid we used to put it sort of cooperatively, be able to go to a summer camp where we was practicing Zionist scouting and so on and so forth. But I wasn't used to carry a wheelbarrow like, you know, that you had to be the husky kind of guy. And I lasted two weeks, and while being there again, I found tyrannical ways. All of a sudden when all the preaching to me was equality and Socialism, there I found out for the first time

of my young life that they had rates of pay. One guy for the same work was rated one kind of a pay. One kind -- the other guy was rated maybe less or more. Now, that was not Socialism, that was not Communism; that was Capitalism. I was smart enough to understand it from my school years when those subjects were taught in school about what Capitalism is and what Socialism is. So again, in my own young mind then and even up till today, it was sort of a tyrannical kind of a way, okay? And each time later with Nazis entering in the same way and going through the selections, right and left, and being beaten up, and being taken to Slonim to jail, and then winding up in a work labor camp until the partisans freed us. All I saw was tyranny, and then I finally am the free man and I'm in the forest. I'm already -- every time I turn around, I still see anti-Semitism. I still see all kinds, that people are sort of valueless instead of being valuable. You know how hard we think about today when we hear an accident one person dead, a child died, or be from an airplane or anything like that, it makes front page headlines and everything like that. Look how life meant through that era of years, be on the Soviet side, be on the Nazi side, life was meaningless. For a guy to kill somebody even in the forest, he did not have to wait for a court martial as it was later years organized when the paratroopers, and all of a sudden life became -- be a little bit more with a meaning. They couldn't go ahead, just pick the pistol and kill somebody. They had to stand trial. Even the police and Germans that we captured as POWs, they were not just taken out and shot. There was a trial. It was conducted in front of -- at least to make it look like a trial. So again, tyranny is in work, so no matter how I put myself together in the picture when I started to write about it, I thought the best title for it would be "Torn Between Tyrants." I remember one time, it entered my mind -- and as a matter of fact, I even wrote a poem naming it like this here -- "Memories That Linger On." But I did not find that to be strong enough to describe my living at a time and all I went through to be just memories that linger on. Everybody has memories lingered on. But "Torn Between Tyrants" stood up to me because really that's what I was telling in my story, and I am telling it today the same way.

Q: Do you think that that's still the way of life?

A: It justifies me of the past; however, I divorced myself of the tyrannical seeing and feeling unless I talk about the Ku Klux Klan, and I find that even in a free society as we live in the United States, that in order for us to be free, we must tolerate even the people who are not worthy to be tolerated, but that is really our freedom. Therefore, therefore, I am not faced with a tyrannical way unless I think, just think of the story with Skokie when the Nazis wanted to come and march. In part, listening and seeing that people have still this kind of gut feeling in them to do to prove that Hitler was right is tyranny to me. Because again as I say, where is man to understand man? If I'm right, I'm right; and if I'm wrong, at least point me out where I'm wrong. You cannot always live by the lying propaganda about it. So "Torn Between Tyrants" is not any longer a part of my life, but it was definitely a part of me and part of my life between the late '30s until liberation came and then after until maybe until I felt differently when I came to the United States.

Q: Let's talk about the partisans. For Jewish people who went to fight with the partisans, was there a different commitment and a different situation than for the Soviet partisans? Different

responsibilities, different . . .

A: Let me bring in a little story over here. We know for a fact that on many occasions that it happened. That Hitler tried to use the partisans in focus among Jews, so what they did on a few occasions send Jews to go. And they wired them, like I said -- not wire them as we understand it of today. With certain criteria, they supplied them where to go and they'll take you in. And your job will be to remember some of the things and come back, as their location, what are they involved, how much ammunition do they have, and so on. And I cannot attest to this moment that it was anti-Semitism because I was not there listening to the trial or anything like that. But the fact stands out that there were on a few occasions the Jews met their death, they didn't believe that they did in order to save their lives and were willing to give the cooperation of the Germans. And they probably did it with the hope that they will be understood, so their argument was then why didn't they come clean originally to say, "Look, I've been sent here by the Germans. I am to do this and that and the other. However, that was my best way of escaping or coming." So argumentive, who knows? Maybe the person listening to their testimony at the time was not seeing the world this, he only saw to kill Jew is no crime. So yes, it did happen in many kind of ways. And Jews, even when I escaped and I came to the forest, it was not as easily as a guy from the local areas who did not want to go to Germany for labor or who did not want to be inducted in the German Army which they made all of those openings for them. Although they had them in separate corps, you know what I mean, serving. When they came and they escaped and they told their reason, it was on his home turf, remember. He probably was not from many miles away, he was from the area. And it was very easy, it wasn't a question will they accept him; it was a question only where is he going to be placed? Is he going to be placed in our battalion or in another battalion, whatever it is? But he had an easy home, much easier than fleeing. Now, the only time I could say that it wasn't a problem was after the massacre in Germany, in Chita. After the massacre, for instance -- or before that massacre in Bentschen. When the Jews came, it was another story. There was, however, a fact that from Chita, one -- the most intelligent at the time would have been in our midst, who rose to be an attorney. And he was party, which again to say that's what Hitler tried to do, to annihilate the first thing, then come against you. If he once he has the brains out, everything will be easy for him to achieve his goal of the final solution. So he, a man came and organized a group, and he came to the forest. He's been shot, he did not live in the forest more than days before being killed. And again, what would you say? Was that an act of anti-Semitism? Was it an act of jealousy because he was intelligent? Take it for what it's worth it. I am not familiar for the time serving in that area as a partisan, that a Gentile person was treated the same way as that Voretsky (ph) was, you know, from Chita. That we know a fact, and tell you one more thing. We had a guy by the name of Bo Levine (ph); that was his name. The man had the highest medal, he was responsible for downing more trains in our midst at that time than anybody else. Sure, everybody knew Bo Levine, a blonde guy. There was not much to see that he was, you know, six-foot tall, a husky kind of guy. He was of an average height, you know, five-nine, five-ten, stuff like this here. But that man had only one thing in his mind, what the tyrannical ways taught him to do. Is to go and seek vengeance. There were cases where we, all of us were involved in vengeance-seeking, because there were anti-partisans or anti-

Soviets, but then in some cases, some went to take vengeance to those that we knew who came into the ghetto and robbed from Jews or anything like this here. Yes, we went to seek vengeance, too.

Q: So you're saying that for a Jew to go to the forest and be a partisan was a difficult risk?

A: Absolutely. Absolutely. He was another story, and I am talking now when you use that word, "partisans," I'm talking about if he came and fall into the partisans, that there were Soviet partisans. If he came into the National Polish Partisans or in the Ukraine part we called them Bondarises (ph). These here people were just doing the same job that the Nazis did outside, and they were poisoned by the same thing. They were anti-Soviet and they were anti-German just the same, and Jew what they _____ to. So be that it was the era of the time that the poison of anti-Semitism got so many or be for or any reason to describe, a Jew was not treated to join in the partisans as easily as a non-Jew. So this, for the records, I want to testify and make clear, that that was the case.

Q: You started to talk about the fact that you had to kill people. You had to avenge those who had done you or your family wrong. And yet, I see here a very, very sensitive man, and I'm wondering what gave you the strength and the toughness to do what you did.

A: I describe in many of the writings that I did before that humanity had to turn to savagery in order to survive. Not because that's what their wish. Even in my poems I say the same things about it. It's very hard to describe the person you become. To give you an analogy how we train to escape in case of a fire from a tall building, and the facts speak that no matter how much training we do when the real fire happens, people still get confused and they do things differently than they anticipated. And the bottom line and the final analysis is that the curing was not because of training. It perhaps helped but it wasn't that. The same thing, situations of that nature as in my way when you had to think only positive in order to survive, because negativism would only be a matter of how soon will you be dead. Murder, beating, or whatever it is, but how soon will you be dead? So you could not project or map yourself out a program that this is justifiable or this is not justifiable. And at the times, I don't know if in a bad situation what I would turn. When I had testified in Skokie before the Nazis had to march, and I was at city hall at that particular time in Skokie, they asked me a similar question. "Mr. Zissman, what would you do if Collins and his gang come to march on Skokie?" I says, "I cannot give you a real answer. Am I going to grab a stone, and hit -- throw at him? Am I going to maybe to take a bottle, take it with me and throw a whole bottle at him? I don't know the outburst that it could project, this is why I'm pleading with you do not let these people march because they will only create certain evil out of people who do not intend in a normal way to do that. And this is my best way to analogize or use that metaphor to you about it, how could human beings do certain things? I know from facts because of police when we captured them and they told us. Before a massacre or anything like that happened, the Germans, they did not want them to be sober because people under the influence act totally different -- act totally different as they do when they don't have that alcohol. So this is -- again, I'm only using that as a metaphor. People change at times of

horror or stuff like this. I was changed, too. And I want to be making this testimony right now. Yes?

Q: So to some extent, you become your enemy?

A: Your enemy or survival. Or survival. I cannot use my own enemy, I can use the word that you do various things to survive, and I would justify that because you have to.

End of Tape #5

Tape #6

Q: When you were fighting . . .

A: Yeah?

Q: . . . what do you think was your greatest difficulty?

A: Basically, at first when I was fighting the greatest difficulty was to get involved in killing because I still to this day do not want to use that method as what we were doing as killing. It was defending. It was self-defense. Even the Bible tells us that if someone that if someone rises to kill you, you rightfully have the right to stand up and kill him. So I must make that clear that our way was not that we were coming from a culture to say that that's the only way to do. Our way was everything must be done in order to not let the enemy win. Oddly the enemy was instilled in us and in me precisely about it, and I wrote it one time talking and interviewing somebody from the camps. And I asked the same question, did the barbed wire electrified being everywhere in the camps, how come so few threw themselves? I said I know and I heard of cases where people threw themselves on the wires in order to get it over with from all the sufferings. But that wouldn't that be common sense to say in a case like that where you gave up life and you know you have no escape. So why let the person get the best out of you? Go ahead and get it over with. But the fact remains that life is very dear. That is the reason we stop sometimes to eulogize one little child who didn't show anything in life, and we eulogize one little murder that it happened and we take it at the same thing. And this always must remain a separation between murder and self-defense. We cannot take it as for granted that a person uses a gun to kill to name him a killer. He sometimes uses a gun to kill to stay alive, to defend himself of the other one who is trying to kill him.

Q: Do you have any thoughts on why more people didn't fight?

A: Yes. When I first came to the forest and for a while I was very bitter that I did not have a lot more followers like myself. And the fact remains of the group that I had organized in the ghetto in Briesen, not a single one after all the talk with it, not one who was on my group or in my group at that time, which it fell through, survived. Not one. The best fact again is with my uncle, that he came out of hiding, crying and hugging and telling me why didn't you listen to your Harold? And this is a known fact of life that people at times do not want to listen to righteous person, but then they come eulogizing why didn't we listen? And that was the same bitterness that I had in me for quite a while that I didn't, even though seeing the hardship and the facts that the bottom line was that I was accepted. Even if it took me three weeks to get there, the bottom line was that the four of us, when we came we only found one Jew who I used to feel hurt about calling him a Jew. The man was assimilated, he had birth already, his parents were no longer Jewish and he was not understanding a single word, although the guy who came with me couldn't speak Yiddish either. He learned Yiddish later during the period of time because

he was also sort of an assimilated Jew. And I often used to, with the other ones, say, "I'll tell you, when I am here, at least I have a reason. I am Jewish. I don't want to offend you." Because I used to talk to him, I says, "Tell me, what did you know about Jews?" He says, "Nothing. To me, a Jew did not stop for one moment to think." I did not have a guilty feeling that I am not practicing Judaism, you know, so I says, "This is where my hurt feels when I see your hurt, I feel I'm hurting for something. And here I see you're hurting for nothing, so I'm probably putting your case above mine, so please never be mad for my questions I'm asking you." And I still proceed to say more should have sacrificed their lives by escaping instead of just justifying the means that there was no way out.

Q: I see as still a fighter. Can you talk just for a little bit about the long-term impact that your experiences have had on you?

A: In my mind, if I remember when my son reach the age and he was in college and all of us Americans at the time had the feeling of Vietnam. In our hearts we were almost complete minded. My wife used to put me to that question, what would do if Michael is called? It was a bad answer, but I did it. I say, if called to fight, I would let him go and fight. As a mother, my wife thought in those years the same as some of them could try with their sons to run to Canada. Maybe perhaps if I was a married man when that happened influenced by someone I loved, or maybe be a father of a child or so, maybe it wouldn't be so easy for me for settle with fighting ideas. So in a way I feel that the picture changes when you become a father. The picture changes when you think of your son. I remember the first time when I was in Israel and I used to look and all the questions that were on my mind before of Jews, that they are not fighting and this and that and the other. And I looked in our family, here my first cousin -- he's married to a young lady that she's a military person. She's by now probably a colonel in the army. He works for a defense factory. I took a look at my wife's family, where a father son, both of them, he survived as a matter of fact by being in Russia at the time. But coming back when I tried to tell him let's stay together, why do you want to go to Israel? I also wanted to go to Israel, but I didn't. And he did not want to listen to me, to one word. And he went to Israel, and it's true, the family got splintered, you know what I mean, and split up like this here. But I know, and I was very curious to find out at the time -- as we know here, they both were fighting under Rabin at the time when they were there. And I asked him, "How did you feel about it?" He says if I had to go tomorrow, they call me and they call my son at the same time, I say we are going. There is not such as well, you know mean, I have all of this here. Basically, my own thoughts had I been in Israel, either I would have been dead by now. But I would have definitely been in the armed services. At the time in the '40s when I was supposed to go illegally at that time, I couldn't see myself becoming, you know what I mean, continuing my education. Maybe the time will change, but primarily I know I would have been in field. I would have been -- be that it was the Haganah or the _____ at that time or later when it became a regular army, I know. That's what my mind changed because of that, sort of that fighting was not any longer a trade of some and not for others. But I saw fighting must be a trade of everybody, you must be prepared

to fight and not prepared just to dwell over books and signs and so on.

Q: You're talking about the spiritual fight as well as physical fight?

A: Correct. Correct. I think it belongs with each other. Maybe in some other nationalities which I could not have the feeling. I wasn't somebody else, I was me. Maybe it's a different situation. Maybe they in some nationalities look at fighting that it's a part of patriotism and the guy who didn't fight is not a patriot. I believe it's wrong because not everybody can be a fighter, no longer that everybody can be a doctor. Not everybody can be a scientist. Not everybody can be anything else. I say for a person to resort to be able to go to fight, I believe it's something in the person himself. I cannot see that he's just going and lagging because these guys, they are the first one to raise that white flag once they are in the armies. And I could not be thinking that way, but in the Jewish way -- let me speak to what I am and what I know. I believe we must retrain our offsprings. It cannot be said that a Jewish boy cannot go to learn how to shoot a gun or to go to a course where guns are being taught how to shoot and where, or the same story of being hunting. We always used to have a criteria and a joke that when a Jew became a Gentile after he does everything else he could do with the Gentile in church and everything else. But the story goes after he had to join him when he went hunting, he says that I cannot do. Why do I have to go kill that animal? And as we know, that's a popular thing, and we know for the record if we were start looking around, that few Jews are hunters. But you say Gentile, it's sort of an inborn thing with them that hunting season, they got to go, they got to see that blood and kill that little animal, you know what I mean, or so on or the other. Regardless what it is, but that's a whole admission to go duck hunting or to go deer hunting and so on. I believe we must learn from history. We are an old, old nation of survival, but perhaps it's time for us to look into it from a different perspective. That to survive as we see the religious person with the beard in Israel and with the tefillin on his head, he stays and prays the gun on his arm. We must tolerate it, not look down on it because that, I believe, is the only way of survival.

Q: To stay vigilant?

A: To stay vigilant and not be different this case than the other nations around. You cannot go by the story of what at that time Esau and Jacob were blessed by their father where he told to Esau, "You shall live on your sword." While he told Jacob to be -- it's good, meaningful things and I believe it doesn't hurt to do both. You can still become a rabbi, you can still become a student of theology. You can become a student what you want. But don't look down that it comes a time that you have to resort to be drafted in the service and you have to go to defend your country. I believe that's the way it should be. We know past doing the Czar, during the other one, that the Jews were no good for anything but they drafted them in the service anyway. They were good for meat for the cannon, for cannon meat, you know, and so on. And there were, therefore, a lot Jews who did not want to go serve because they couldn't have the kosher foods, you know what I mean, served to them and so on. And they would desert a lot of times because it was

against their belief religiously. And in other words, why should I go fight for somebody that when I get through fighting -- the analogy would go again with the black people of the United States. That when they had to go fighting, they couldn't be together with the white man who was fighting the same enemy. So there are certain changes must come true in life as it goes on, and the changes is with understanding. So to answer you, I am still a fighter, yes.

Q: Is there anything else you want to add?

A: Well, this part, I believe, you can talk and bring out more Biblical stories or more of the other one stories. I used to say that if we were to hail after the kingdom of the day of David, King Solomon, we would have been another people. However, we must understand that all of that happened when we were a country on own land, and in order to be a country, we had to have a military. We had to have an army. But when we were driven out or taken off our land, so we saw the holiday of poor what it tells us. The story with Mordecai, the story with Esther. Speaking about it, a lot of people see something missing in the while story, that it goes on, and at times they are very despondent. Because look what Mordecai did, he told is niece to go ahead and get married to a non-Jew, which it remains questionable to a student who starts learning. That student has to be so much accommodating to justify that. For the sake of survival, you do everything. I, for instance, justify what Mordecai did. If that were the man that Esther had to go and engage herself to become that queen, that through way she could help her people if it meant her to go in on that thing and become at that moment to get married to a non-Jew and the outcome was that she remains the hero. We don't call it the scroll of Mordecai; we call it the scroll of Esther. So the whole story of Esther became. So we can take it and see the difference. If that would have happened in Israel perhaps like the high priest when it comes when it come with the story of Hanukkah. He showed, he and his sons were the first ones to rise and kill these people who wanted to switch him over to the Greek mythology at that particular time and become of a different belief and the pig and everything like this here. But he was a leader, and he rose, so maybe if something like that would have happened by one of the conquerors in Israel, we would have had another story to tell again of heroism when it happened. But since it happened outside the realm and the country of Israel, there was only one way to do, is politically. And that's what Mordecai did, he did a political thing in order to save the Jews at that time of Persia. But it's confusing when you start reading at times and remain Jewish like the question is asked. You can go on on so many various historical facts.

Q: Okay, but I don't -- yeah, but . . .

A: But it's only going to come to the same conclusion, so if you want to dwell, you'll find it. More and more to what I just am saying or said. And I want to conclude in it in saying in order to survive as a nation for the years and years and centuries to come, we see the change and the change was started from Israel. We see the capabilities, no one in the world with modern weaponry had ever created a thing like Entebbe where the whole

world was rocked, of how they did stand up and do it. So that's what I am saying, you must stand up, but you must also train. I'm all for the way it is in Israel, but I'm only against that one thing. That they still give a person who is religious, they give him, in other words, a way that he can because of that avoid being drafted in the army. I believe that cannot be done. If that a person is a conscientious objector for killing, let him work in a hospital. Let him work someplace where he can create his holy mission, save lives. Don't have to go up, that's still a soldier. A soldier who saved the other injured one is still a soldier. He can still continue with his rabbinical or theological ways of prayer and everything like that. But that must be done, we cannot exclude somebody because he is of religious belief that he should not serve in an army. I don't believe in this theory at all, and I hope someday this will be changed.

Q: What you're saying is we need a commitment to community?

A: Absolutely. It's community and country, belongs to everybody. It cannot be delegated to just some, and the rest of it just to stand and applaud. It's everybody's job and it's everybody's duty.

Q: Go ahead and stop tape. What are we up to now?

A: Okay. We're looking at an event that took place where two brothers with the beards are witnessing a marriage to we see the son of the bride and groom. On the top line, you see me with a cap on. Next to me is my mother. Next to my mother is my father. Below him, the bearded guy is his father. And at the bottom row where we see children, so you see to my right that's my brother next to me. Next to him with that little bib on him, that's my youngest brother. Now, next to him is a cousin of mine which he belongs to this part of the family. Then the last one to the left if my sister. So there you have the family of all four of us taken on this picture shown at a wedding ceremony that it took place before the war.

Q: Do you remember what year this was and what town?

A: It was in the town of Ostrava. I would approximately say that that had to be in the year no later than 1936, about 1936, you know, at the time.

Q: How many people from that picture survived the war?

A: None of them. I'm the only one who survived of all of these here people. Here you see a picture when there were visitors in our family and that young lady who's not seen in this picture was a photographer. They came from a city called _____ near Warsaw. And it was our house, the background as you see, where my mother and all the four children are there. My father, of course, is away on business, so he couldn't be in that picture. So as you see, I and my brother are wearing the school uniforms because I attended a parochial type school where a uniform was a part of the attire that we had to wear. So you see on

the top, I am. Below me is my brother with a school uniform. Next to me is my youngest brother. Then is my mother, and there is my sister, who actually she was the third in the family. So this is what this picture is all about.

Q: Okay.

A: And, unfortunately, you see I'm smoking a cigarette, which looks like -- got me smoking in later years very young, but I'm very happy that I gave up smoking, at least almost 10 years. So I'm on a tricycle in my city of _____, at the age of about three at that particular time. By the way, all these pictures that we are going to be seeing, I didn't bring them with me, but I got them in the United States from the family -- from the relatives that they had it here. And that was sort of gift to me about it. This picture was a reproductive picture that I did do in Italy after I received the picture from the USA from my aunt with a big picture of the wedding at first. That they reproduced it for me in Italy.

Q: Who is that?

A: That's my father and my mother. The original pictures, I already said, was the first thing that we shot. From that picture, I reproduced all of that. And here is showing my mom and dad.

Q: What year?

A: I, again, would say like it was before. That it had to be about 1936. '35 or '36. This picture was -- oh, not yet? I'll wait. This picture was done in 1945 when we first came to Italy. As you see, I'm wearing the jacket like the Eisenhower army jacket that I was dressed in. And at least it proves to me when I look at it today that I was young at once, even after all the hostilities that I went through and when I came to Italy. Next to me is my wife. And I believe our faces, if you want to be a good judge, will say that a lot of grief is looking from these faces from the past, which it was still haunting on us. And that's the reason you see the seriousness and the grim look on the picture by both of us.

Q: One more.

A: This picture here was taken at approximately in June of 1945, where in my story I told us that we had in the military academy of Modena where we were stationed, it was about 7,000 refugees which 5,000 of them were ex-inmates from Mauthausen, who were brought in in one day on trucks. And over there in this camp there was mixture of kids who came out of camps, who probably were taken to the camps when they were real young. And at this time, they were 17 and 16. And it was a tragedy, within a few days these kids went out on the streets of Italy and some of them got infected with VD diseases. And, therefore, while I was working on the administration of the camp, our first plea was to all the people who came for us, which it was the Israeli Army stationed with the British together. It was also the U.S. Army soldiers which they were nearby. I don't

remember the army or which number they were in, but they were with us. So our plea to them was please get these kids out and let them be situated in a separate camp. So here we see in this picture a truck, and we see the image, we see some Israeli soldiers, rather near me where I'm standing -- I'm standing at the side here, and next to me the guy, Vina (ph), who's dressed in a sports coat and tie, and then . . .

Q: You're in the white shirt?

A: Yeah. I'm in the white shirt. Then there is a soldier, an Israeli soldier next. So in basic theory or story, what it is all about, that this was the truck on which one the youngsters are loaded on. And there were about a few trucks, maybe a column of 10 or 12 pulling out of the camps, taking those youngsters in to a children's camp where there were only children supervised by trained teachers until they were taken to Israel at a little later time. So here you can see for yourself the first survivors of the Holocaust, be from inmates of camps, be from partisans. Like all these young guys that you see around me are former partisans in the forest near the forest where I was coming from in the same way. Tell me what I'll say. Please forgive me for the former frame, that it was I said on the left side. I'm here on the right side of the picture dressed in the shorts, and my arms clutched. Next to me is a partisan. Next to him is a partisan. And next to this guy is an Israeli soldier who served with the British Fifth Army, who was the head of the group who came to take the kids out of camp to bring them to their own camp. The next one is _____ Vina (ph) is his name. He was also a partisan, but he was not in our forest. He was in the _____ Forest, which it was near Vilna. So on this picture you will find people who were partisan fighters, former inmate of concentration camps in the back row. And from distance, we see the truck where on this truck, the children who will be taken to their own camp.

Q: Okay, when Marseilles tells you, you're going to explain who's in the picture, okay? When he give you the cue.

A: (Sonja) Take from left to right, top standing, how do you say it? Standing. My cousin, Ellen Lauren (ph). You want both names? Okay. My mother, Goldie. My father, Hirsh. And the middle one is my mother's sister, Visha (ph). And my cousin, Heinda.

Q: Where are they, in the back?

A: Oh, in this. Okay, I wasn't supposed to? Then my cousin, Heinda. And my brother, _____. Then it's me, Sonja right there. And that's my uncle, Laurel (ph). This is my brother, Penhaus (ph). My cousin, Laura. My aunt, Coleen. Her son, Eddie. And my brother, Darren. And this is my brother, Eddie. This is him.

Q: Say it, though.

A: Oh, this is my brother, Elenie (ph) who survived.

Q: And you're holding him -- in the picture?

A: Yes. Okay. Oh, I'm holding him? Okay, fine. Okay, I understand.

Q: When was this picture taken, Sonja?

A: 1935. My aunt went to Argentina.

Q: Okay. Let's see, you wanted me to take one more -- you had one more picture?

End of Tape #6

Conclusion of Interview