

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with David Stoliar  
August 20, 1997  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with David Stoliar, conducted by Radu Ioanid on August 20, 1997 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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**DAVID STOLIAR**  
**August 20, 1997**

Q: Good morning.

A: Hi.

Q: Could you be so kind to tell us your name?

A: David Stoliar.

Q: When and where you were born, please?

A: I was born in Keeshanau(ph), Romania, in 1922.

Q: Would you be so kind to tell us a few words about your family background, the family of your father, the family of your mother?

A: My father is originally from Tickeena(ph) and he lived one time in Keeshanau(ph), where I was born. My mother is from Keeshanau(ph), she was from, born in Keeshanau(ph) and her family was from Keeshanau(ph) and then my father and my mother, they moved to Nice, France, where my father had a hotel with his brother, so I lived my first five, six years in Nice. Then they moved back to Bucharest, where he had a factory with another brother of his, textile factory, so then I went to school in Bucharest and then we lived in Bucharest until 1935. Then my parents divorced and I was sent to Paris and then I went to school, in Fontainebleu, which is just, few south of Paris.

Q: Did you, did you live in Paris with your mother or with your father?

A: With my mother. She moved when she, when they divorced my mother moved to Paris.

Q: And your father?

A: My father remained in Bucharest and I was sent to Paris and then to Fontainebleu, where I was in school. Then, after couple of years, my father took me back to Bucharest and then I went to school in Bucharest.

Q: So, in France you stayed until which year please?

A: Until 1930, sometime about 1935, '36?

Q: Do you remember any anti-Semitic incidents during your childhood in France?

A: No.

Q: No. So what happened to you once you came back to Bucharest?

A: Well then, then I had problems in school. There were a number of incidents in which being Jewish, they pick up fights and things like that and eventually, in '38, the Jews were kicked off of the Romanian schools and actually I think we formed our own school, only Jews were in that school, private school, until 1939, in the 1940 and then in 1940 there was no more, no more school, nothing for the Jews and myself included. Then we start, authority insisted that we should wear bands with the Star of David, with the yellow bands and everywhere we go we had to use these, we had to carry these bands and we were not allowed in the street cars, so we had to find our own transportation. Sometime the street car, we were allowed to go in the second wagon of the street car. And then of course, we were called. I was, what I was, seventeen, we were called into what they call labor camps and we were taken. In the morning we had to report to the labor camp, which was just outside Bucharest and were supposed to dig trenches. These trenches were made specifically for training of German soldiers, targets. And we were, we are, we were kept there by Romanian soldiers, until evening, until dark, then we were allowed to go home. And the next morning, of course, we had to report back.

Q: When, when did this forced labor start?

A: 1940, I would say. As far as I know. But of course there were a lot of rumors, you know. First, just at the end of 1939, there was a pogrom in the Jewish quarter of Bucharest, in \_\_\_\_\_, where they have shot a lot of Jews, just in the streets. Then, in another time, they start picking up Jews and they were taking them to, to a forest, the \_\_\_\_\_ and then they killed them there. Of course all these were not published in newspapers, you only hear these things. So things were getting worse every day and the labor camp was, they were talking about not letting us go out in the evening, home they were, wanted us to start sleeping there too. So my father saw that this is getting to be very dangerous to live there, so he decided that he has to get me out of Bucharest. So he manage, with money of course, he managed to get me a passport and of course the passport had the stamp, Jew, on it, \_\_\_\_\_. Anyway and, and finally they, they were talking about a group of Jewish people from the Batar(ph) organization to immigrate, try to get out. So you, but they didn't had enough money, the Batar(ph) organization, so they decided to take some outside Jews to help them financially in getting, getting the vessel, cost of the vessel. So my father paid, I don't know, quite a sum of money, so that I get a seat or I get a place in that, in that vessel that they were organizing and slowly, slowly the time arrived that, that they had a group of people, including the Batar(ph) and so forth, that were ready to be sent to Constanza(ph).

Q: Who, who found out about this vessel and about this project, you or your father?

A: My father. I was, I was working in the labor camps, so I, from dusk to, til evening, so I had no, the only thing was, when I was coming home, I was hearing the rumors \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: So you didn't take care of any, any formality?

A: No, I did not take care any formalities. But eventually he got permission for me to, to get out of that labor camp. It was just the time when they were already organizing that not to let anybody get out of that labor camp, so he paid somebody to get the permission to, to take me basically, to the railway station and took me to the railway station and there were hundreds of people of course. Those that were preparing to go on Shtruma(ph), ready to board that train. Then I was, there were, they locked up the whole train, every wagon was locked up and the train moved to Constanza(ph), took them about a couple of days and in Constanza(ph), they parked the train and they did not unload the train and we were kept in a train, a couple of days until finally they said all right, the vessel is ready to be boarded. They did not allow us to get out of the train until actually right into the Customs. They did the customs, naturally the inspectors start checking everything that we had with us and any jewelry, any money, anything of any kind of a value, we had to leave to the Customs. We were just allowed to take clothing. So, after we got through the Custom, quite rude Customs, they just took everything they could lay their hands on. Then we were allowed, we were allowed to board the ship, that we never seen it before, so, and each one had a particular place.

Q: Let's, let's go back please, one second and talk about the papers that you carried with you. So you had the passport, you had a ticket, did you have a, an immigration visa?

A: No. A passport with no, nothing in it except my picture and of course the stamp Jew on it and the ticket that was issued by the organization in Bucharest with my picture on it and things like that. I am a passenger on, on board Shtruma(ph).

Q: Can you describe please a ship?

A: The ship?

Q: Yeah.

A: The ship was very funny looking ship, in respect that there is, as you board the ship there is only one way of going down the ship and the ship was built sort of like cubicles and in order for you to go into your bunker, you had to crawl into it, there was not enough space for you even to sit and we all crawled into our spaces and we could not even move in the bunker, we were so close to each other.

Q: So there were several layers?

A: Many, many layers. The top, I would say about six or seven layers, so that you had to pull yourself in and then underneath same kind, but the only thing you could see that there was steel, \_\_\_ up was wood. So the lower portion was, you could hit the steel and upper portion, it was wood.

Q: So it was a huge, let's see, a big boat made from steel, on which they built a sort of superstructure.

A: Superstructure, wood superstructure, correct. And of course we were too many of us on this vessel.

Q: How many?

A: Over 700 people. So, because we were so many, they told us we cannot go up on the deck, all of us, so we were given times when we were, were, about maximum 100 people could be on deck, so we took shifts when we could go on deck and toilets were in, very few of them and it was just a terrible conditions. From the beginning we saw that it's, it would be worse than a prison because the air was difficult even to breathe. And yes there is one thing I would like to mention, that after we finished with the Romanian customs, then we passed through the people that organized the vessel. Now they restricted us exactly to 10 kilos of baggage. One piece, 10 kilos. Anything over that has to be left behind.

Q: Are you saying that these people who restricted you were not the Romanian Customs, but the \_\_\_\_\_ people.

A: I don't know whether they were \_\_\_\_\_ people, but anyway they were part of the organization of the, of the vessel.

Q: I see.

A: We had no choice, no time to even to ask who are you. They told \_\_\_\_\_, "You're going to board now, but you have to, you have to leave everything above the 10 kilos." And they had, of course, a scale. You put your suitcase on a scale. My suitcase was, if I remember correctly, something around 15 kilos. They said, "You have to unload it." So we unloaded several things and then we put back, it was 12 kilos. Unload it again until it was 10 kilos, then we were allowed to proceed. So imagine so many people waiting, waiting. So it took us forever just to embark on this vessel.

Q: Why do you think they did this?

A: I think they were afraid of overweight already. Already the ship was meant for less than half of the people that we were. When actually, in order to obtain more funds, they allowed more people to join, until it became 700, over 760 people.

Q: Did you feel in any way that the ship was unstable, not very stable because of it's load?

A: I doubted that we ever made anywhere and everybody, everybody was so flabbergasted, shall we say, that this, that a thing like what they call a vessel will manage to take us so far

away. We doubted that it will ever be able to leave the port.

Q: How big was the crew?

A: We haven't seen the crew until actually when we're all on board. We, we were told that the crew, it's a Bulgarian captain and a Bulgarian chief officer and several Bulgarian, the whole crew was a Bulgarian crew, about seven or eight people. And actually we seldom saw the, the captain altogether, but you see, we were so, so many of us, that we have, we were not manage, we were not managing even to walk around. We were glad when we were allowed to go on, on the deck for a few hours just to breathe a little bit of better air.

Q: Can you please describe the journey?

A: The journey, we left Constanza(ph) at night. We were pulled out of the port by a tug, a Romanian tug and once they took us out into the sea, they disconnected and they left. Then, we tried to work the engines, we had a very, very hard time to make the engine work. It pop up and then stopped again. Anyway, I think it took us practically all night and the engine still didn't, didn't start. Then I understand that we had, start sending SOS's because the vessel was floating into the sea, but it was not moving anywhere. The captain send SOS's and eventually, now the, now the next day, the same tug, tugboat that took us, pulled us out, came back. It came back and we requested that they, if they could repair so that the engine can start. They tried and tried but they told us that it would cost us money. So we explained that we are left with no funds at all because the, the Custom took away everything we had. So then they requested that we, everybody that has a wedding ring, which were, miraculously we were allowed to keep. I didn't had one, but in any case, many, many, many people had. So we collected all the wedding rings from the people and we gave them to the crew of that tugboat. Then they went into the engine and they start playing around with the engine and they said, they, two conditions. If we give them enough money, they may be able to pull us all the way into the Turkish waters, which would take us about a day or so. But if we don't have enough money, then they said okay, we'll try to repair the engine and if the engine works, we are going to be with you, floating next to the vessel, into the international water, close to the Turkey, Turkish waters and then we will leave you there. So finally the engine start working and we start sailing towards Turkey and the tugboat was going next to us and then it went away and it took us about three, four days because it was very, very slow, until we reach the so called border with the Turkish territorial waters.

Q: Did you know other passengers on the ship, did you talk to them during the journey?

A: Oh yes, of course. First I had the girlfriend, my, we were actually engaged and she came with both of her parents. They were, their place was way below, in the vessel's belly, like. So and I was completely on different side of the vessel. But we managed to see each other from time to time, somehow. She was with her two parents. And I had also two friends from school that were also on the boat and several other people that I knew.

Q: Did you talk to them during the \_\_\_\_\_?

A: Yes, yes I did.

Q: Did you know Yakov Berkovitz(ph), the leader of Batar(ph) on the ship?

A: No, I did not know him.

Q: Did you feel that there was any organized or organization or organized life on the ship?

A: We, we knew that of course there is a Batar(ph) that organized everything, but we have very little communication with them, so and besides that, as I said, there was no way of moving around, so each one just stayed in it's quarters until we were allowed to go to, on, on the deck for a, for a, for a short time and then back there.

Q: So basically everything that you knew about the trip, during the trip, was by way of rumors?

A: Exactly, yes.

Q: So what happened when you got closer to Istanbul?

A: When we got closer to Istanbul, the engine stopped working and the boat was floating, you know, towards the, the shore. It was right in the other opening of the Bosphorus(ph) Straights and the rumor was that we were \_\_\_\_\_ too close to mines, because the Turkish waters were mined and there were only certain passages that they can get through. So but we had no way of knowing how to get through. But suddenly a Turkish tug appeared, from the Bosphorus(ph) and tied us up and pulled us through the Turkish water and took us right into the Istanbul harbor.

Q: So let's summarize for one second. You left Constanza(ph), on the Black Sea, you left Romania on what date?

A: That was eleventh, eleventh of December of 1941.

Q: And you arrived in, in Istanbul?

A: About fourteenth or fifteenth of December.

Q: Okay, so what happened next?

A: In Istanbul we anchored, in the middle of Istanbul, which is quite a, quite a big area, between the Asian and the European sides, right? So you have, the port is on the Asian side, but as well as on the European side, we're right in the middle of that big water, like a lake.



Q: So you are not close to the shore?

A: No, we were pretty far away from both shores, but anchored right there in the middle. And of course we had then, Turkish police came on board and they came, they were constantly on board the vessel and we stayed there for about two months. From what we understand, that the Turks will not allow us to go into the Mediterranean. We couldn't go forward, we couldn't go backwards and the engines were irreparable on board ship. So finally I understand, we got permission for mechanics to come on board, remove the engine, take it ashore and try to repair it ashore. So they removed the engine.

Q: So, if my understanding is correct, one of the problems was that you, you, the passengers didn't have an immigration visa for Palestine, correct?

A: Right, first we did not have any immigration visa for Palestine, secondly we had no visas for Turkey, \_\_\_\_\_ we were not allowed to get out of the vessel and we had to stay aboard until somehow they would manage to repair the engine. Meanwhile of course there were all kinds of rumors that were going on. First, rumors that maybe there is a chance that they childrens will be allowed to disembark. And there were quite a lot of children on board. Then there were rumored that maybe they will allow us, they will make a camp on the Asian side of the Turkey and allow us to stay there, until somehow it will be resolved what to do with us. All these things never materialized, neither the children, neither going on board. But, what did happen is that finally nine people that were on board with expired immigration papers for Palestine, they got permission to be taken out of the vessel and then to be, to proceed to Palestine. So the nine people, nine person disembark, were allowed to disembark during those two months that we stay there.

Q: Did you ever see \_\_\_\_\_ spokesman in Turkey?

A: I saw him, not on ship. He picked me up when I was in the police station.

Q: So later?

A: Much later, yes.

Q: Did you ever see any British representative of the ship?

A: No, I did not.

Q: So the only contact that you, as passengers, had, was with the Turkish authorities?

A: Right.

Q: Could you be so kind to describe the sanitary conditions on the ship during these two months?

A: They were terrible. First of all, we had not enough food, we were just eating biscuits. Finally we understood that the Jewish agency in Istanbul got permission to export some food to the vessel, but it was all dried food and the only thing they allowed water to be, you know, water tanks to come and fill up that, the vessel's tanks and the sanitary condition was just, I would say atrocious because we had no opportunity to wash ourselves. A lot of people start getting fleas, there were a lot of sickness, vomiting and, and people crying and it was quite a, a very difficult position to survive.

Q: Do you remember a ship committee, on the ship during this period?

A: Yes, the Batar(ph) organized some kind of a committee and they tried to keep people from, from getting wild, like trying to get out on the deck and things like that. But actually, people were so, shall we say, flabbergasted by this happening, that it's like they gave up living. They, they, as the time was passing, they, we start believing that we never get out of this, because nothing is moving, you know. On top of it, we don't even have an engine, never mind going someplace.

Q: So the engine was gone?

A: Gone.

Q: It was ashore, in order to be repaired?

A: Right. And the engine was never returned to the vessel.

Q: Never returned?

A: Never returned.

Q: How do you know this?

A: Because we were very surprised on the twenty-third of February, a tug, coming and start pulling us out. First of all, we see a, quite a huge tugboat coming and trying to tie us up to the tug. Then we have, we see people coming and they did not pull the anchor, they cut the anchor. Now, the anchor is made out of steel, so they came and physically cut the anchor.

Q: Did you, did you witness this, or?

A: I saw it myself.

Q: You saw it.

A: First of all you hear it, you know, when they try to cut off the anchor and, and secondly, you

could see the boat, because the boat, trying to, when the boat, the tugboat tried, the people from the boat tried to attach the vessel, quite a number of people tried to prevent them from doing that. Obviously we had some suspicion about that, so we, we prevented them to come to attach it, so that the police start pushing us back. So \_\_\_\_\_ quite a commotion for quite a while until the police manage to push us back into our, below the vessel.

Q: Did you see the Turkish police on the boat?

A: Yes. All the time and of course when this happened, we had quite a, quite an army of police to subdue us.

Q: So you were on the deck when they pushed you back?

A: Yes, I was. I remember that they start pushing us back.

Q: What happened next?

A: Well the next they managed to attach the, the tug, managed to attach the rope to the front of the boat and they start pulling us, that was already nighttime. They start pulling us back into the Black Sea, \_\_\_\_\_ back to the Bosphorus(ph). Took several hours, they pull us out, out in the, back into the Black Sea, then they cut off, they cut off the rope and they left. Of course, we shouted, what are we supposed to do now? They start yelling, "Go back to Borgaz(ph)." Why Borgaz(ph), I don't know, this is one small port in Bulgaria. We did not understand at all, but they left and we were now floating fairly close to the shores, because we could hear noises from the shore. At night of course, you could not see the shore, just noises and we were just floating, no engine. Of course we were worried about mines, we were worried about everything and where do we go without engine? Until morning time, morning came and then of course you have a big bang and the whole thing blows up. And I was projected way up in the air, suddenly. Now, I was exactly, my bunker was right under the deck, so the whole thing blew up and I was in the air and then I was in the water. And as I was in the water, naturally, were quite a lot of people in the water.

Q: How many?

A: Hundreds.

Q: Alive or dead?

A: All alive.

Q: All alive.

A: Or at least they were swimming, you know. People here, there, quite a number of people were swimming all over the place, including myself. And then \_\_\_\_\_ yelling and

yelling, help, help \_\_\_\_\_. Women, women and men, no I haven't seen any children in the water. And we were floating, it was pretty cold, but luckily the sea was not, was quite calm, just very cold. And slowly, slowly, I was seeing less people and less people and less people floating. At that time, I saw a piece of deck that had bars and it was quite, you couldn't see the, what was there, but people were holding on these bars and as people left, died or frozen, this piece of deck was getting up and up and eventually you could see that there was a piece of, oh, I would say about, let's see, five meters by six meters, something of this sort.

Q: Of wood?

A: Of wood, the piece of, so the deck was quite thick and so I was also holding on one of these bars.

Q: You were in the water?

A: In the water, so by just flipping over, I was now on top of the deck and as people were drowning, naturally the deck was getting lighter and going towards the surface, so eventually I was on this deck, oh with about, let's see, about a foot of water above. I was still all the time in water, but at least I did not have any more the necessity of swimming.

Q: Were you dressed?

A: Yes, completely dressed. In actual fact I had a leather jacket, leather kind, it was of course quite heavy because it was full of water. But, in any case, I saw also some kind of piece of, of bench that usually was on deck. It was attached with wires on this piece of deck, so by pulling this bench on top of this deck, now if I sit, when I sit on the bench, I was about a few inches above water. So now I was above, holding to that piece, above water. Towards the evening...

Q: So, so, I'm sorry to interrupt.

A: That's all right.

Q: You were in the water, the explosion was sometimes in the morning, after drifting for one night...

A: Right.

Q: On the sea, correct? You stayed on this bench until towards the evening?

A: Right.

Q: Okay. At this moment, how many people did you see around you?

A: No, I, I saw one, which I, dead, further away from the, from the, from the deck, but it was entangled in wires. That was a person there. I could not reach him because I was myself not very mobile.

Q: And that was it, the rest of the people were gone?

A: No more people. But, towards the evening I see a man, sitting on something which obviously it was a door, he was sitting on the door and paddling. So, he came towards me, so I pulled him up and sat him on the bench. And that was the chief officer, a Bulgarian. So he, at that time, started talking in Russian.

Q: You knew Russian?

A: Yes, it's my mother language. He told me that he happened to be on the deck in the morning. He was the, he was on duty on deck, when he saw something floating towards the ship, from the shore. It was like, looked like a torpedo anyway, that was coming towards the vessel, so he run from the deck towards the captain's cabin and as he was opening the door of the captain's cabin, the explosion took him in the air and when he landed in the water, he landed with that door in his hands, with the knob in his hands.

Q: This is the door on which he was paddling?

A: Right. So what he did eventually, he went on the door and that, that how he managed to stay in the water. So when I pulled him, I pulled him off this door. So, he says that the only way we can survive is really by us shouting all the time, so that we don't fall asleep, because if we fall asleep we will never wake up any longer. So we were sitting back to back on this bench and yelling all night. And as the, the night came, as the day came along, we were already exhausted of yelling. And then we stopped and, and then I felt that he is not any longer on my back. I turned around and he, he fell from the bench onto the deck and his head was in the water like on his belly. In other words, he could not possibly breathe any longer, he was dead. And, but he was very close to me, but just a corpse.

Q: So you were in the water for?

A: About 24 hours.

Q: 24 hours. We are now in the morning.

A: Yeah.

Q: You could see the shore?

A: All the time. Soon as the, day, day, the daylight came, I could see the shore and you could

hear the noises of the shore, like an engine, pumping engine and things like that.

Q: Did you think about trying to reach the shore?

A: Yes. Then I decided, maybe I'll be able to swim to the shore. So I jump into the water. What happened is, if you take, from the bench and you land into the water, you are much lower into the water, now the shore was quite far away. So I swim a little bit and I could hardly move, so I turned around and went back.

Q: To the deck?

A: To the deck.

Q: And to the bench.

A: To the bench. I was only a few yards away and I realized that the shore is much further away than I thought, because of the, on the, when you are on the bench, you can see further than when you are in the water.

Q: Do you remember anything about what you were thinking during that night?

A: I was, knew that obviously I am going to die from drowning and I, I was not looking forward that kind of death. So I was contemplating to cut my veins or something that is a quick death. So while I was contemplating what I'm going to do next, suddenly I see quite a big vessel, fairly close, sailing in, in the, in the ocean, in the sea. So I looked up and I see people on deck on that vessel that moving pretty fast, like a cargo, it was like a cargo vessel, with a few people there. And they were pointing towards the shore, so I yelled at them, but they, they pointing toward the shore. So I concluded they tell me to swim to the shore, which I already tried. Anyway, the vessel goes away and then I see a boat with sailors coming towards me. So my conclusion was that that vessel, the people on the vessel, the sailors on the vessel pointed out not to the shore, but that somebody's coming. Of course they came, they picked me up into the, into the boat, they pick up the chief officer and the other corpse there, all three of us on, in the, in this boat and they took us ashore. These were sailors from the lighthouse, which you could see it and they took us into the lighthouse.

Q: There were no more bodies on the sea?

A: That's all. They picked up basically myself and two bodies. Afterwards I don't know what, whether they did pick up or not. I talked to them, but you know, it was the language barrier, they speak only Turkish and I didn't have no way of communicating with them at all. But them put me on a, on a, on a bed, they gave me blankets, cover me with blankets and they gave me some food. They gave me some cheese, bread. I remember onions.

Q: This was in the lighthouse?

A: In the lighthouse, yes. And I lay there, probably, probably about 12, 14 hours, something like that, quite a long time. Until finally two policemen arrived.

Q: Were you frozen?

A: Yes, well my legs were frozen and my hands were frozen, so I had a hard time walking or even eating, because I couldn't move my hands. My arms yes, but not my hands. So these two policemen came, they picked me up, went outside and waited for a bus. A bus came along, they pulled me into this bus and they took me to Istanbul. This was on the Asian side, so they took the bus, then we took, took me to a, a ferry and the ferry took me across to the other side and then an ambulance was waiting for me on the other side. The ambulance took me to the hospital, which I understand at that time was the military hospital in Istanbul. As I arrive, or as they pull me out of the ambulance, there were a few reporters that start asking me questions as they were taking me in.

Q: In which language?

A: In French, in Russian, in English, which I didn't speak at that time. But in French they ask me, where are you coming from and what's your name? There was a particular reporter that I met him later on because as it happened he was locked up with me later and he spoke good French so I was able to give him my name and that I came from a vessel Shtruma(ph) and what happened to the vessel, I says, was blown up. And then they took me into the hospital, into a room and I was constantly with a policeman in, at the door. The doctor came in and they bandaged my, my hands and my feet in camphor. And they changed the bandage and they kept me there for about a, about a week. But constantly I had the policeman at the door and I didn't see anybody except the nurse and a doctor.

Q: So nobody from the Turkish authorities came to talk to you?

A: No, nobody.

Q: Nobody from...

A: From anyplace.

Q: British Consulate.

A: Nothing.

Q: Nobody from the Jewish agency?

A: Nothing.

Q: What happened next?

A: Next I was already able to walk, my hands were still not okay, but I was able to walk, so they dressed me up and they took me by car to the police station in Istanbul.

Q: Did they give you new clothes, clothes, or?

A: No, I was still with the same clothing.

Q: What happened at the police station?

A: At the police station they took me in their top floor of the police station where you have the, it's like a prison, you know, with the bars.

Q: Cells?

A: Cells. And I was put in one of these cells and then I was taken for interrogation. They ask me various question, what happened, who I am and so forth, took me back to the cell. Then a suitcase came, they delivered me a suitcase and in the suitcase I had shoes, new clothing, new clothing, another jacket and so forth.

Q: Who send you this suitcase?

A: The Jewish agency, actually Mr. Brod(ph), which was the head of the Jewish agency in Istanbul, he send me that.

Q: Did you get any sense of hostility from the Turkish authorities, from the people who interrogated you?

A: No.

Q: Any sympathy?

A: No. Just very cold facts, no.

Q: How many people interrogated you?

A: One or two at a time, several times. And that was, I realized that I am in a political prison. Why, because there were several other people in cells, about three or four. Couple of Germans, couple of Bulgarians and I believe also an Englishman. More or less from the news, newspapers. They were there because they were on one side or the other and they explained to me Turkey's neutral, cannot allow from one side or the other, they try to maintain neutrality.



Q: How long did you stay in the police station?

A: About three weeks. Oh, the second or third day, I already receiving, I was receiving food from outside, in other words, a person was delivering me, twice a day food. Once in, once in the morning and once in the evening and I understand this was also from the Jewish agency, Mr. Brod(ph) told me that he arranged with a restaurant that delivered, to deliver to the police station as long as I am there.

Q: What happened after these three weeks?

A: After these three weeks, I was told that I am allowed to leave the station and I will be taken by Mr. Brod(ph), who will pick me up and take me to his house. He came, now my clothing were in the, my old clothing were in the old, in the suitcase, I came, he came, picked me up and we took a taxi, we took a taxi and took me to his home. There I had the chance take a bath, we had dinner, his wife was there. I slept very well. And he explained to me what I did not know, that it's a miracle that I was still alive after Shtruma(ph), because I am the only witness that can say what happened to Shtruma(ph) and then the authorities would have been very glad to make me disappear. Then there would be no trace of knowing what happened to the vessel. He says, "The fact that you managed to talk a few words at the entrance of the hospital and telling them what you, your name and where you coming from, these reporters right away published in newspaper, so it's all, was already known throughout the news media that you are one of the, you are a survivor of this particular vessel. And because of that, it seems that the Turkish authorities were reluctant to make you disappear, basically. But they kept you in their police station because they did not know how to deal with you." Should I continue? No.

End of Tape #1

**Tape #2**

Q: Mr. Stoliar, with your permission I would like to go back a little bit in time and my first question is what was your age when you embarked on *Shtruma*(ph)?

A: 18.

Q: 18. You basically left because you wanted to leave or this was a decision of your father? Or both?

A: My father's decision, to get me out. He explained to me that things may get much worse than are now and so he said, "I'm going to do everything possible to get you out of here." Of course I was already coming out of this labor camp, day, day labor camp, quite exhausted and it's of, manual work there, of digging trenches and the behavior of the Romanian military was worrying me. They were rough. So naturally I conveyed this to my father, so more than ever he decided that I have to get out.

Q: Did the decision of your fiancée to leave influence you, or this was a coincidence?

A: Just a coincidence. They had their own problems of survival and they were worried also about their own lives and so it was just a coincidence that it happened, that they also managed to get a ticket on this vessel.

Q: Who was she?

A: She was a girl, born in Germany. The father was a Romanian and her mother was from Germany and we just got very friendly and we decided, once we managed to escape from this situation, to get married.

Q: Can you tell us please, what you felt when you saw the ship?

A: My first...

Q: \_\_\_\_\_.

A: My first reaction was, can I get out of here? In other words, to get out of \_\_\_\_\_, going on this ship, but I soon realized that it was out of the question. They, we were locked into this, pushing us inside and there was no way out but to leave the ship.

Q: So you considered going back to Romania before leaving?

A: To get back to Bucharest, but that, that thought disappeared very quickly when I realized that the Romanians are not going to allow anybody to leave this condition.

Q: Could you describe to us what type of food you had during the journey to Istanbul?

A: It, each, I think each one of us brought a little bit of something that could keep us until we get so-called normal food. So we had a little bit of, a few cans that we were allowed to take and a few biscuits and we were supposed to get, on the ship, something to eat. Again, there were some dry biscuits and basically not much more. But they told us, as soon as we reached Istanbul we are going to get, the suppliers of the ship were going to get us food once we reached Istanbul.

Q: So basically you didn't receive, on the ship, any food?

A: Hardly any food. There was even no way of getting the food, we were just too many of us into such a small space.

Q: I'd like to ask you again about the sanitary conditions on the ship during the journey to Istanbul.

A: During the journey to Istanbul, first of all we could hardly move, because we were told that, you know, because of so many people, if there are too many of us on the deck on one side, the, the vessel can be in danger. So, first of all, they wanted us to move as little as possible and also, once we are on a deck for a few hours, also to try to keep the vessel in balance by not going too much on one side or the other. So we were directed, some people on the left side, some people on the right side, then go slowly. In other words, there was a possibility that the vessel may get out of balance if we move too much. So the conditions were such that you just stayed in your bunker as much as you can, without, without moving. So there was no way of getting cleaned up or, or even, even, you barely managed to, to drink water, never mind about washing or something like that. And as the time went by, it was getting naturally worse and worse and worse.

Q: How about the sanitary conditions in Istanbul during the two months, did they improve or they got worse?

A: They did not improve, but the fact that we were able to go on a deck, there we were able to get a little bit of water to wash your face, but very, very little of it and there were no facilities that you could use in order to, so you realize that you are going to stay that way until you are going to somehow leave the ship.

Q: I would ask, I would like to ask you another question about the moment of the explosion, you, you were thrown into the water, dressed, fully dressed. Did you get injured?

A: No, I did not. And quite a number of people that were blown, blown into the air and landed into the water, there was, we did not, I did not see any sign of, of injured people, except that there were just swimming and yelling. I didn't see any injured, except that they were just trying to keep afloat.

- Q: So let's go back to the moment when you are in the house of the representative of the Jewish agency in Istanbul. Did you have your papers with you?
- A: No, I had nothing. Mr. Brod(ph) explained to me that he would, I was taken to his, he was allowed to take me to his house because he promised that I'm going, he's going to deliver me the next morning to the railway station, to the policeman that is waiting for me, to take me on the train and so he has just that evening time to talk to me and he was, he was talking more than I was, he was a, he tried to explain to me what happened to me after I left the hospital, that he tried to get to me and they did not allow him to see me, they did not allow him, he weren't to have any kind of contact, written or otherwise, or to talk to me and it, as I said, it were, he told me that it is a total miracle that you, that you survived Shtruma(ph). I says, "This is a natural thing." What, that you survived after Shtruma(ph), this is also quite a miracle. So, and he said, "The papers are with the policeman, I'll take it next morning, I have to take you to the train station and the policeman will go with you all the way to the border between Turkey and Lebanon and he will release your papers at that time. These are paper, it's a *laissez passe*(ph), with permission to enter Palestine as an immigrant. This came from London, through the, the consulate in Istanbul, was given to me, given to the Turkish authorities and the Turkish authorities are going to release it once you leave the Turkish territory."
- Q: Did the Turkish authorities confiscate your passport, did they keep any papers, or your passport got lost in the...
- A: No, I, my Romanian passport? No, still with me all the time. In actual fact, anything that I had on me, they did not touch it.
- Q: They did not touch it?
- A: No. They didn't touch it, I didn't see any, anything that they went through it, although I was, of course my, my clothing was, in the hospital I didn't have my clothing with me. But otherwise, everything I had on me, my Shtruma(ph) ticket, my Romanian passport, that's, that's the only thing I had, it was all the time in my jacket.
- Q: So they gave you papers in order to be able to transit toward...
- A: Right.
- Q: Palestine?
- A: Yeah.
- Q: You, you didn't see anybody from the British consulate?

- A: I didn't see any, no, I didn't see any British person from any, any authority and in actual fact, even Turkish authority I haven't seen, except when I was interrogated at the police station. Otherwise, I had, they never give me any explanation why they keep me in prison, although I, I try not to antagonize them, but I said that, I did ask them, once they finish with the interrogation, "On what basis do you keep me in prison?" So they said, "Because you are illegal in Turkey, you did not have a visa for Turkey, so therefore we cannot release you."
- Q: I understand. Because we, before we go further away, I would like to ask you to tell us a few words about the main actors in terms of countries, of this tragedy, how do you feel about Turkey, how do you feel about Romania, how do you feel about Great Britain? I would like to know what do you think about the organizers of the trip? Basically, how do you see the various responsibilities and countries or organizations who are responsible for this tragedy?
- A: Well, let's start with the Romanian authorities. I understood there is a war and I understand, I understood at that time that Romania was allied to Germany, consequently they're going to behave about the same way as the Germans are. Killing of Jews start pretty early in Bucharest. At random. We had the iron guard, guard \_\_\_\_\_. That was, behaved the way I understood, just like the Nazi's did in Germany and to keep away from them, to make sure that they don't get you. They can grab you in the street or something like that. Of course afterwards, when I had to wear the yellow band with the star of David on it, I realized that they can pick you up, doesn't matter what you do. The authorities, the first time that I got in contact with the authorities was of course when I, in the train in Constanza(ph), I was pretty, they behaved like wild people. In the customs, they were putting in their pocket anything that they could get hands on, which at that time I considered to be absolutely barbarian, really. Then, the more, then when I went to the ship and then I realized that unless we give them all our wedding rings, they are not going to do anything about it, more than ever that, we are like animals\_\_\_\_\_and they behaved like. Then in Turkey again, we just saw the Turkish police. They were totally unconcerned about human life, or the condition of the human life and the more we were on the vessel, the more we realized that we'll never get out of this because they couldn't care less. That we are human being, it doesn't matter, really. It's just that we are an inconvenience to them and they are going to try to correct that inconvenience. The fact that we were hope that maybe they'll put us in a camp in Turkey, this disappeared very quickly. The only time that we had a little bit of hope is when they allowed the nine people to go ashore, then we said, maybe there is a possibility something will happen. We were watching whether they'll allow the kids, the children to be, disembark. But as long as they were on the vessel we knew that nothing would happen.
- Q: How many children do you think were on the ship from there?
- A: I would say close to 100, 150. Quite a lot of children because they were all families together, not only individual people.
- Q: So basically from a number of passengers, so forth of...

A: 760, I would say that 100 were children.

Q: Also children of low age?

A: No babies, but small children. Anything between six and 16.

Q: How do you see the British responsibility in this story?

A: We knew about British policy in Palestine and we expected maybe they will not allow us to land in Palestine. Once the vessel goes into the Mediterranean, of course it will go towards Palestine. We expected, possibly, to be taken somewhere else instead of Palestine, but it's a chance that it's really worthwhile taking, even if we are taken to a camp, doesn't matter where, whether it is on Cypress or anything else, it still cannot be as bad as in the condition that we were there, that we were in Romania or on the vessel. Once I landed in Haifa, I was taken to the CID there, police station at the border between Lebanon and at that time Palestine. And of course there, that was the British police, they ask me a few question, they were quite polite, they, they just wanted to know some facts about where I am coming from and they say as soon as that, you can take a car and go wherever you want to go. So I was not, they did not, the British authorities in Palestine did not interfere whatsoever with my movements.

Q: So if I understand correctly, you left by train Turkey, with a Turkish policeman?

A: Right.

Q: And he went by train with you where?

A: To the Lebanese border.

Q: To the Lebanese...

A: The train stopped at the Lebanese border, I think it was Aleppo.

Q: Okay.

A: And in Aleppo, the Turkish police just gave me the papers, my papers, they said, "These are yours." Shake hands and left. So a, a car was waiting for me at, at the, at the station in Aleppo.

Q: Who sends this car?

A: Only with the driver, that's all. There was nobody there but the driver. He approached me, said, "I am here to take you to Haifa."

Q: Who sent this car?

A: I don't remember, really. I suspect some Jewish agency from Palestine that did that and the car took me from Aleppo to the Palestine border, stopped there, went to the police station, they asked me a few questions, then the car took me to Haifa, where a friend of mine was waiting for me, Mr. Horowitz(ph), and...

Q: What do you think about the responsibility of the organizers of this voyage, the people who really organized the trip?

A: The organization, really the only thing they were interested is to get as many, as much money as possible out of this thing and irregardless of life conditions or anything like it. Just like butchers, to take so many people into such a small space. My, I consider it to be criminal, because there was, if you look, afterwards, if you look at the condition of the ship, there is no way that the ship would ever, ever, even manage to get into the Mediterranean. With what? You see, it was old engine, it was cracked. Now, you have a cracked engine, it will be very difficult to make it work. And yet, it was for them, for the organizer, this was like something is very normal, that the ship had no living conditions, they considered this normal, so. Of course, I know, it's war time, but there is a certain limit that you can allow yourself to do things, even though it's war.

Q: I understood that the ship was built in 1830.

A: It was, I wouldn't even call that a ship, really, it was just a, a piece of steel that they put some wood on top of it and superstructure and they thought that that would be good enough. Actually I don't think the organizer even expected that this so-called vessel, will ever reach anywhere. But it was an excellent way of getting money.

Q: So, if we say that this was highly improvised, is a very mild statement?

A: Very mild statement.

Q: So what happened to you next in Palestine, after reaching Palestine?

A: Well, of course I, I was still had problem with my hands and my feet, they were still, my hands were still frozen and so I had the physical therapy and it was necessary and things like that. Then I tried to find some work.

Q: Did you, did you have difficulties in walking or using your hands?

A: Yes.

Q: Any \_\_\_\_\_?

A: At the beginning, my hands are still, they were still frozen, so I, I had a hard time eating, using my hand. And I had also hard time walking because of my feet were still stiff. But slowly, slowly, I start managing to get normal again and then I start looking for work in Haifa. So I had a few friends that helped me during this time.

Q: So where did you work?

A: I work as a night watchman to some, in some company parking lot. Then I managed to become a driver. As it happened to be, American mission in Palestine, that was driving a pickup. Then I went, I decided to go to Jerusalem from Haifa. There I stayed with another friend of mine. And then I decided to join the British army, in 1943. There was a lot of, there was a very strong movement at that time, in Palestine, to join the Allied Forces, so that you can contribute towards the victory against Germany. You know, a lot of propaganda to join. So I joined the British army and after training they sent me to Cairo and from Cairo I went to, as the Allied army, British army, where, after \_\_\_\_\_, they were advancing towards Benghazi, they Tripoli and I was with the army service corps, service corps. Actually I was driving a tank, water tank for the troops, to give them water, so we were constantly behind the lines, supplying water to the British, New Zealand, South African. We're part of the eighth, Alexander's eighth army.

Q: Do you know English when you, you enrolled?

A: Very little. Absolutely minimal. But while in the British army, it happened that they allocated me to 100 percent English regiment and I was the only non-English of this regiment. Afterwards they had the Palestine brigade and things like that, but when I joined, they didn't have that yet and I was sent into an English corps. So I was the only foreigner, shall we say, that did not speak English. They're all from England. So they took upon themselves to make sure that I learn English. So they taught me the English language, slowly, slowly, but...

Q: Did you, did you encounter any forms of anti-Semitism in the British army?

A: Absolutely not. Never I was questioned or, about whether my religion or where I'm coming from. They just knew that they had to teach me English. Actually I would say that my stay in the British army, '43 to '46, three years, I never, never had any sense of being apart of them because I was a non-English. I was very well treated. As an equal to them, without any restrictions.

Q: During these three years you were practically, most of the time, in Africa?

A: Right. From Cairo the troops were advancing towards Tunisia, all throughout North African desert and I was just there, until they took over Tripoli, then I was stationed in Tripoli and then were to, they were preparing to invade from North Africa into Sicily, so they're preparing the Sicilian landings and then just, I was nearly going over to Sicily, then the war



ended, 1945. Then I went back to Cairo, where I stayed another one year, in Cairo headquarters of the British army. I was demobilized from the British army in Cairo, in '46, no '45 and then I stayed one more year as a civilian with the British army and then I went to Palestine.

Q: I would like, with your permission to go back to the war time, because I'd like to know what happened during the war, to your family, to your father and to your mother.

A: My father remained in Bucharest and miraculously he survived and stayed there until I brought him to Israel. My mother moved to Paris when she divorced my, when they divorced.

Q: Before the war?

A: Pardon?

Q: Before the war?

A: Before the war. So she was living in Paris. She married another person that had a, a boy. They lived in Paris. I left Paris in '39, one of the last trains that they managed to get through from Paris to Bucharest. She remained there. The things in Paris got pretty bad, so her husband decided to send his son and my mother south, in to the Vichy part of France, where they thought maybe it's safer there. So she took a train. He, she and the son of her husband, took a train from Paris going south. At the border with the Vichy part, they were told to get out of the train, all, everybody and all the Jews that they could find, that was German, German troops there, all the Jews that they could find, they took them and put them on another train, that was a cattle train and they were taken out and then she disappeared and her husband survived Paris, so I met him after the war and that's how I know. He, he came to visit me in Israel and he explained to me that my mother was taken off the train with his son, put in another train, they went and they landed in Auschwitz and there she was killed together with his son.

Q: Let's go back please to Palestine. So you finished your military service in 1946 in Cairo and you moved back to Palestine. Do you have a family already?

A: Yes. At the end of 1945, when I was demobilized from the British army, I met a girl in Cairo and we got married and then in '46 when I went to Palestine, I went with her. So we moved and we moved to Haifa. I lived in Haifa and I worked, found work with Esso Oil company at that time. They had the operations plant, fuel, so I was the superintendent of that plant, until Esso decided to pull out of Israel and then I was offered a position to go to Japan for an American company, so I took that position, went into Tokyo.

Q: Did you, did you go through the independence war of Israel...

A: Yes.

Q: Or you left before?

A: No, no. I returned in '46, very shortly afterwards the War of Independence started. Being an ex, I was a sergeant-major, being an ex-military person, naturally I was one of the first to be taken into the Haganah(ph) and then the Israeli army. And I was on the Syrian front. Then there was armistice, fighting again. I was with the Israeli army until the war ceased. And was armistice, then I was demobilized, I looked for a job and joined Esso Oil company.

Q: So you were on the front line?

A: Yes, in actual fact, I was against the Syrian army, in the north, but it was a short duration, only a few weeks, then we were pulled back.

Q: How come did you get an offer to work in Japan?

A: Because it was an American company that was looking for people, they were, Japan was in very poor condition economically, and there was opportunity in Japan to bring in things that Japan did not have and this American company had their headquarters in Tokyo, but they had, they couldn't get people to get to Tokyo. So they came to Haifa, one of their executives came to Haifa, was negotiating to get a friend of mine to come for two years to Tokyo, so my friend introduced me, said, "Maybe he wants to go, too." So they took both of us, we signed the two year contracts and we went to Japan. From two years it turned out to be 18 years, but anyway, that's...

Q: Was an interesting experience for you?

A: Very, very, very interesting, because I was in charge of barter agreements and was quite fascinating how you can export and import goods without money going through your hands. That's, it's a barter. You give something for something else.

Q: So you stayed in Japan 18 years?

A: 18 years, yes.

Q: Can you mention to us what you consider of being the most important event in your life in Japan?

A: Well, I was able to see how a nation which is, was completely destroyed by war, slowly, slowly becoming economically so wealthy. I have very good living conditions in Japan. As far as living among Japanese, it has been excellent experience. I like their culture. I like their way of living, of more of the way they live and let live. Never I was discriminated, just only the difference is that I was a foreigner there, but otherwise, I was, I was very, very impressed

by their attitude to the other people. Towards themselves and foreigners.

Q: How did your family adapt to Japan?

A: Pardon me?

Q: How did your family adapt to Japan?

A: Very, very well. They also, of course we had in Tokyo, a Jewish community and we had friends. And unfortunately, after about 10 years living in Japan, my wife had a heart attack and died in Tokyo and I was left with a 10 year old boy and then after a few, a few years, I married a girl that was going through Japan, an American girl named Fashion and we got married in Portland, Oregon, because she was from Portland, her family was from Portland, so we decided to get married in Portland and then she moved to Tokyo with me, then we lived another five years in Tokyo, then we moved to Taiwan. We lived there another five years and then we decided to move back to her own place, which is Oregon. So we moved to Portland, then decided to live in \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: Mr. Stoliar, I would ask, I would ask you, I would like to ask you another question. Remember after South Vietnam fell, a lot of people left by boat. There were pirates and a lot of tragedies on the sea. Did this impress you, did this trigger memories?

A: Absolutely. I was visualizing all these people that running away from Vietnam, being more or less associated with our problem that we had during the war, just history repeats itself all the time. And not only the Vietnamese, but also the Chinese that were running from China into Hong Kong and the camps that they were put into. Quite vivid.

Q: I want to thank you very much.

A: You welcome.

Q: Mr. Stoliar, I would like to go again back to you and to ask you a few questions about your family and Shtruma(ph) voyage, from Constanza(ph) to Istanbul. First of all, could you tell us please what, what was the name of your father?

A: My father's name Jacobs Stoliar(ph).

Q: And the name of your mother, please?

A: My mother, Bella Lakeman(ph), her maiden name, then Stoliar when she married my father and then she remarried in Paris and her family name then was Tomashin(ph).

Q: So she was probably deported under the name of Tomashin(ph)?

A: Either Tomashin(ph) or Tomasin(ph), depends with, with an h or without, I don't know. And, unless she, unless she was under her maiden name, I don't know, but she was married to Tomashin(ph) and her, shall we say her stepson was also Tomashin(ph).

Q: I understand. I'd like to kindly ask you to go back to the voyage of Shtruma(ph). It must be very difficult to be confined on, in such a small space with so many people. How did you feel?

A: At the beginning you start some kind of a desperation, you know, some kind of a feeling of, that something drastic will happen, something that, like close to death. And then you start trying to eliminate all the problems that are surrounding you, such as \_\_\_\_\_ you cannot move around so you, you getting like into a cocoon and try to eliminate as much as possible what surrounds you, becoming within yourself and see whether you can survive under such conditions.

Q: So you didn't want to talk too much to your fellow passengers?

A: Right and also my fellow passengers, they were not talking much, either. It was less and less, is like each one was in a different world. There was very little communication towards the end, very little communication. It was like something was going to happen, bad and just were just waiting for these things to happen. It's like was, you were already in some kind of a mourning type.

Q: So basically there was less and less hope?

A: Less and less hope. Is like we felt that, we felt that we have reach the end, with no way out.

Q: Can we go back to the moment when you were in the water? More exactly, that night when you knew that you have to survive, how did you succeed in surviving?

A: I tell you honestly, even today I cannot explain why did I survive when everybody else did not and I still don't have an explanation to it. And because of that, in the first years after the Shtruma(ph) tragedy, as I could not explain to myself why did I survive, I felt some kind of a guilt, guilt of why am I surviving versus so many people, including the captain, including all the, all the other youngsters that were on the boat, that there were at least as good swimmers and things like that, they have not managed to survive. And for many years I avoided talking about it, including my wife, because I felt that really I cannot justify why I am still alive. With the time, I came to reconcile myself with the fact that just miracles do happen from time to time. But I have no explanation because I have nothing special while I was in water that would have kept me more alive than other people.

Q: What did you think for, during all this time, when you were in the water?

A: First of all I was hoping that somebody, somewhere, somehow is going to hear us. Why us,

because I had the chief officer behind me, also yelling and screaming and talking loud and things like that. So we were so concentrated. He emphasized so strongly that, "Don't fall asleep." He emphasized that I should be constantly, if nothing else, we just talking, so that I don't fall asleep and so we were concentrating on that and it's only later, when the, the daybreak came, that I suddenly did not feel him any more, in my back. I don't know how long this time has taken, but you know, it was still very, very cold and I was getting colder and colder and maybe I thought, maybe I don't feel any more, something behind me, but then, then I turned around and he was gone, he was laying down.

Q: Did you get during this time, really desperate?

A: No, it's when I saw him in the, dead in the water, then I got really desperate. If he, he was just as alive as I was and then you turn around and he's dead. I said to, I said to myself that that's the end. So at least let's try for the shore, let's try to swim for the shore. Then when I came back and I saw I cannot get to the shore, then I said to \_\_\_\_\_, "If I have to drown, I might as well kill myself before I drown." So, I had a knife, a pocket knife with me and I pulled it out, but I was unable to open the blade because my hands were frozen. So while I was struggling with that knife, suddenly I see this big vessel towards me.

Q: What did you, what did you think, what did you feel when you saw the rowboat with the Turks coming to, towards you?

A: I feel a great relief, \_\_\_\_\_ was finally they arrived. I talked to, to them a little bit, they told me that they have seen things floating in the sea, so they decided to take the boat and see what was going on there. But this just, this is the little thing that I could manage to understand from them.

Q: Did you ever have nightmares about, about...

A: No.

Q: This accident, did you ever...

A: I did not have any nightmares because my only guilt in all this tragedy was the fact that I could not explain to myself, why did I survive when so many did not, although so many had the opportunity to survive being in the water. That means they were still alive after the ship blew and yet none of them, I could not believe that I am the only one. There was no ex, even today I cannot explain, why only me, when so many, they were around me in the water. They could have survived like I survived. The fact of this \_\_\_\_\_ being there eventually, all right? Well the chief officer had that opportunity exactly like I had and yet he did not survive either. And he was not an old man or, or, or a person, you know, having difficulties, he was a strong sailor, he was a sailor.

Q: Were you dressed perhaps in a different way? Let's remember that the water of the Black Sea

is very cold in February, compared to the rest of the passengers?

A: Well, I had a thick jacket, that jacket was completely wet, so actually that jacket, I felt like taking it out because it was keeping me more cold than outside. No, I did not have anything special dressed that, that could have tell me that's why I survived.

Q: When did you, did you start to talk about this voyage?

A: I had several interviews with various news reporters. They, they wanted to write an article here and there about my survival and, quite a number of years has passed. Before Japan, I was not talking to anybody about it. Nobody even asked me when I was living in Haifa and then in Jerusalem. Nobody came to ask me about this. Well, I justified this by, because it was war. People were just, people were already, they told me, "Be happy that you are still alive, we don't know what will happen next with that war." So, and after the war, while in Japan, nobody, once or twice some reporter wanted to write an article about or something like that, but nothing really that, you talk to the reporter for a few hours and then that's it and then suddenly an article will appear here and there.

Q: Okay, David, if you tell us what this is please?

A: First, the top is an ad that we could read, about an announcement of a vessel, Shtruma(ph), giving information to the people that organized the departure of this vessel and where to get in touch if they are interested to go on this vessel.

Q: And what's the date, David, that it says on there? When it was supposed to leave?

A: Oh, they announce that the departure is eight of October, 1941, from the port of Constanza(ph) and that there are limited spaces available.

Q: And what time did you actually depart?

A: We departed around 12 of December, so about over two months like that.

Q: \_\_\_\_\_?

A: This is a ticket to be able to go on the vessel Shtruma(ph) and they advised that I would be allowed to take 20 kilograms of baggage with me. This \_\_\_\_\_ embarkation was reduced to 10 kilograms. This was the official ticket that was given after my father paid for it.

Q: David, can you explain those two stamps on the left?

A: Oh, these are revenue stamps. At that time in Romania, in order to, any official document had to have revenue stamps, to make it official. Romanian revenue stamps.

Q: Okay, we \_\_\_\_\_, tell us please, what is this?

A: This is a picture taken from, in the harbor of Istanbul and you can see, that is, the vessel is overpopulated with people and the metal structure, it's shown below and then the superstructure is above.

Q: How many people?

A: 700, 760 people were on this vessel. This is the same vessel, but it shows the superstructure that was built on top of the steel structure. Now, when the torpedo hit the vessel, it hit below the superstructure, so the metal part went right away to the bottom and the upper part, which was all wood, was blown into pieces in the air, with all the people that were being on the, were into that structure. So these people that were in the superstructure, wood superstructure, were blown into the air and then they landed in the water, including myself and start swimming around. The bottom, the bottom of the vessel disappeared immediately.

Q: And describe the picture, is that your first picture in Israel?

A: This is a picture soon after I went to Palestine.

Q: \_\_\_\_\_. And how old would you have been here?

A: Oh, about 20. This is a picture taken in Tripoli at the British headquarters, around 1944, when I was stationed there. This is 1945, in Cairo, when I married a girl from Alexandria, Egypt.

Q: And her name?

A: Her name is Adria(ph) Stoliar(ph) and I have a son with her.

Q: And this picture?

A: This is a picture taken in Tokyo, in my house, with my second wife and with my son and she is painting, she, she loves to paint.

Q: And her name?

A: Her name is Martha and she's originally from Portland, Oregon.

End of Tape #2

Conclusion of Interview