

SHMUELI, HAIM  
RG-50.030.0432  
Two Audiotapes  
Recorded: 10 June 1996

### ***Abstract***

Haim Shmueli's family is of Sephardic origins, dating from the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. They settled in Germany and then lived in Teplitz until 1938, but moved to Bohemia when Germany annexed that part of Czechoslovakia. The family was well-to-do, and the men had doctoral degrees. Haim's father came under communist influence while studying for his PhD in Dresden. He was in the students' progressive Marxist movement and therefore blacklisted by the Germans. Haim was born in 1935, in Usti nad Labem (Lussig). His mother converted to Judaism, which she renounced when the Nazis came to power. Thanks to his mixed parentage, Haim survived Theresienstadt. He shares his experiences in the children's house of the camp. He participated in the propaganda movie filmed at Theresienstadt. His mother left the family, and all connections with her were severed forever. Haim's father survived Auschwitz, joined the Soviet Army, and came to find Haim following his liberation. One of Haim's siblings perished after the voyage of the St. Louis. They moved to Israel in 1949.

### **Tape I – Side A**

- 00:01** Haim Shmueli was born Heinz Ruman Shmoll. By his father's account, the original name was Samuel and the family came from Spain with the exodus of Spanish Jewry at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Their ancestors settled in Western Europe, specifically in German territory.
- 00:10** Haim's grandfather, Emil Shmoll, was a learned Jew and active member of the Jewish community. He owned a publishing house and a paper factory in Teplitz. He published books in German and Czech, and was the only individual in the area to publish in Hebrew.
- 00:20** Haim was born in 1935 in Usti nad Labem (Aussig), where there was a Jewish hospital.
- 00:28** The family was forced to leave Teplitz at the end of 1938 when the Sudetenland was annexed to Germany. The Jews had the option to move to Bohemia, a protectorate under the Czech regime for a little while.
- 00:41** The family moved to Prague where they were registered as "Jews," settling at 44 Legerova St. Haim's father had a Ph D in economics but worked in any job that he could find. Haim's mother worked night shifts.
- 00:50** Haim's father finished his PhD in Dresden, where he joined the students' progressive Marxist movement and was blacklisted by the Germans.
- 00:61** This situation caused a rift with Haim's grandfather, a traditional Jew, who then banished him from the house.

- 00:65** The relationship was repaired after the death of Haim's grandmother from cancer, and the ruin of the grandfather's business by the Nazis. He joined his son in Prague, was admitted into the Jewish hospital there, and died in 1943.
- 00:74** Haim's father was arrested many times in Prague because of his political leanings. He was in the underground. He prepared Haim for his eventual disappearance by sewing a large sum of money into his coat. That day came when Haim was only seven years old. He went to relatives, according to his father's instructions. They did not allow him to enter their home. Friends took him in for a few days at a time. For five to six months he was alone in the harsh winter of Prague, during which time he managed to survive by removing his yellow star. Eventually he was caught and sent to a Jewish orphanage.
- 01:61** Haim had a brother from his mother's first marriage. His mother was a convert. When the Germans detained her, she was forced to renounce her marriage. As she was considered Aryan, she was not sent along with the rest of the family to Theresienstadt. No one knew her whereabouts, and Haim's father never forgave her for abandoning them.
- 02:55** After three weeks in the orphanage, Haim was sent to Theresienstadt. It was January 1944.
- 02:81** Haim's father showed up in the same gathering place, and they were sent to Theresienstadt together.
- 02:97** It turns out that during the five and a half months during which Haim wandered around Prague, the Nazis had followed him to see if he was going to find shelter with his father's friends from the underground. Every time Haim did something that was considered illegal for a Jew to do (going to the movies, using the train, playing ball in the street, etc.), his father was punished.
- 03:25** He describes the arrival and processing in Theresienstadt, and the trip in the cattle cars to the camp.
- 03:60** Haim's father talked to the Judenrat and managed to convince them to move Haim to the Children's House where the conditions were a little better.

#### Side B

- 03:78** Haim describes the Children's House and life in the camp.
- 04:47** Haim's father was sent to Auschwitz in October 1944.
- 04:60** Haim describes his activities to procure more food. He was caught, hit, and imprisoned for several days, while half conscious. A German soldier freed him out of compassion, and he was returned to the infirmary of the Children's House.
- 05:38** In the Spring of 1945, the Germans began to burn documents. The Russians arrived and the Germans fled.
- 05:57** Only some children were left in Theresienstadt, with Haim among them. The rest had been sent to Auschwitz.

- 05:88** Haim witnessed the arrival of the survivors of the Death March who brought typhoid fever with them. An epidemic broke out and the survivors were quarantined.
- 05:96** The Soviets and the Red Cross arrived a week later with provisions.
- 06:19** The children were organized in groups (they were all considered orphans), and Haim was going to be sent to Sweden (possibly to a convent). Just before his departure, a tall Russian colonel appeared: It was Haim's father(!) who had managed to escape Auschwitz and joined the Soviet Army.
- 06:25** Haim discusses how his father escaped Auschwitz and served under Marshall Zhukov, the first to enter Berlin.
- 06:56** He describes how the transports to Auschwitz were organized by the Judenrat in 1944 and provides more information about the camp.
- 07:06** The Red Cross visit is described.

### **Tape 2 Side A**

- 00:01** Haim speaks about the propaganda film on Theresienstadt produced by the Nazis, in which he took part.
- 00:45** Haim believes that he survived because he was in the special section reserved for children who had one Aryan parent.
- 00:71** Haim provides his opinion of the Judenrat.
- 00:89** He speaks of the children's nationalities and the privileges of the Danes.
- 01:04** The different groupings of children are discussed.
- 01:13** Details on schooling and art classes by a famous artist are mentioned.
- 01:38** The case of the youngest political prisoner in Europe, a three-year old, is discussed along with the children's drawings - how they were hidden and found after the war.
- 01:75** Haim discusses his drawings, all of which were done before he could write.
- 01:86** He talks about his schooling after his father found him and his recovery from his time in the camp.
- 02:05** There is discussion of the classes in Theresienstadt.
- 02:42** The burning of bodies and disposal of the ashes in Theresienstadt, along with the work that the children had to do before the end of the war, are mentioned.

- 02:52** There is discussion of cultural life, Jewish holidays, and Judaism.
- 02:90** Immigration to Israel was, for the family, a consequence of the communist regime reigning in Czechoslovakia after the war. For being a Jew, Haim's father was on the government's black list. His father was appointed a trainer of soldiers in the armored division of the Haganah, before his immigration to Eretz-Yisrael. Pilots in the War of Independence came to Czechoslovakia to train. His father was a trainer in Slovakia for the armored division. In Israel he became a lieutenant colonel...though he was not a Zionist before. Haim's father was very hurt because his friends in the Communist underground turned against him. He saw traitors in them and died young of a broken heart and broken body.
- 03:44** His father's sibling was on the St. Louis and he perished.

### Side B

- 03:70** In February 1948, when communism came to power in Czechoslovakia, they decided to leave.
- 03:93** Anti-Jewish commentaries were present from 1945-1948.
- 04:24** Preparations were made to immigrate to Israel, and Haim arrived there in June 1949.
- 04:26** He arrived in Haifa, to an immigrant camp enclosed with chicken wire! He began studying for a profession, followed by service in the army.
- 04:81** For many years Haim did not want to share his experiences during the Shoah.
- 05:00** Haim's hobbies today include photography and computerized graphic design.