

RG-50.120*064

Herzberg, Shalom **Tape 1 of 2**

- 1.00 He was born in 1915, in Bendjin in the Katowice area. He was the youngest son with four older sisters. His family was prosperous, as were most of the 25,000 Jews in town who had various industries and were not dependent on the Gentiles, and, hence, barely felt anti-Semitism until close to the war. Describes a traditional, though not orthodox, family whose father insisted on his daily Talmud studies as a condition for going to private high school. The family was Zionist and bought land in Palestine. He was an active member of the Zionist youth movement (“Noar Zioni”). He describes activities as well as other Jewish organizations active in the entire Katowice area.
- 1.22 In 1938, he was recruited to the Polish army. The difficult training prepared him well for conditions to come. Fought until Lvov; was imprisoned in Krakow; was helped by non-Jews to assume German identity, and, subsequently, escaped from the train. Walked back to hometown. Hiding while area was burned and searched by Germans. Polish army disintegrated (end of September 1939).
- 1.47 Describes how Judenrat members were initially selected by the Gestapo and how some refused. Different attitudes.
- 1.57 Describes early period in town, relatives from Katowice with them, harmony among youth movements, working with “sonder” document – permitted work and avoided being sent to camps (Germans’ interest in work force). Describes cultural life. Talks about Jewish police, and the fact that most of the 12-14 year olds were pushing for action and began underground (names). “Judencircle” life bearable, mutual aid, underground school classes.
- 2.13 Jewish police initially helpful, need to recruit money and documents for Switzerland. Selection of the 20 “best” to join Polish partisans, of whom just one survived. Visit by Anilevitch and others (names) who thought of revolt, but not rescue. (He knew about annihilation since 1941, but the Jews of Benjin were necessary as suppliers of the German army).
- 2.26 August 12, 1942, first Aktzion (Action) to check documents. Informers in the Jewish police. Families fell apart; children sent away; and ghetto and bunker hiding. His parents and sisters were taken then.
- 2.33 Describes moving through cupboards, bunkers and other places with various people (partly with his girlfriend, Tussia) and assorted supplies used to bribe and barter. Arrived at Rossner (???), which was the transit camp to Auschwitz. Helped by non-Jew and Kuchinski (head of Arbeits-Ansatz) who sent him in the last transport to Blechhammer.

- 2.48 Describes relatively good working and living conditions, and his work. The importance of mutual aid that he believes enabled Jewish survival. International workers. Trading goods, including fuel and coal. How he was helped by Demerer. Bombing by allied (necessary repairs to destroyed power plants kept prisoners essential work force). Describes a visit by the Red Cross. How Jews were hanged on holidays. He describes the crematorium for corpses. He was sick, but helped by a German doctor. (The very sick were evacuated to Auschwitz). He maintained connections with movement members. January 21, Auschwitz evacuated to Blechammer, then both out.
- 3.28 Death march and escape – describes how they walked, by open cattle cars, passing many camps, snow, older guards, starvation, and many fell. Talks about escaping and hiding in the village.
- 3.38 He was liberated on April 27th. After recovering, he helped American intelligence, through his mastery of German, to obtain information from the S.S. prisoners about wartime acts. Court protocols were sent to Wiesbaden for subsequent trials. He received free hand in this volunteer work and describes the prevailing conditions of that time. Describes relationships with Americans.
- 3.50 Meeting Tussia and other survivors.

Tape 2 of 2

- 4.01 Return to “regular” life – he describes his initial adaptation, being alone, traveling. Discusses the Germans’ testimonies that he helped obtain; the disappearance of some, either escaped or killed, and how he felt about punishment, justice and the law (then and now).
- 4.12 Tussia’s experiences form 1943 to 1945, while they were separated. Talks about the story of passport distribution, party keys.
- 4.30 Describes arranging and waiting for papers to go to Israel. Business enterprises in Belgium. In Israel, as a tourist, viewed as a “capitalist.”
- 4.37 Barnblatt trial – his testimony at the time and his views today.
- 4.44 Attitudes regarding the Holocaust. Describes early attitudes in Israel about the Holocaust, survivors and gradual changes. Reservations about him as a rich industrialist. His establishing Massuah as an educational institution, and his contributions to it (and other) causes. What he told his daughters and grandchildren about the Holocaust. The only movement that tried to rescue parents was the Zionist Youth movement.