

RG-50.120\*088

**Levy, Azriel**

**Tape 1 of 2**

- 1.01 Born in June 1923. He was the first of four brothers in Memel on the Baltic Sea. He describes his well-off family. His father was a merchant who had such luxuries as a phone and a car. His home town of Skudiville had 1,000 Jews who were half of the population. His schooling was mostly in Jewish schools and then Hebrew Gymnasium in Tavri.
- 1.06 The family moved to Kovno in 1938, to enable the children's schooling. It was a Zionist (traditional) but not religious home. He was a member of the Zionist Youth movement (Noar Zioni). Describes the many Jewish gymnasiums in Kovno and the cultural and social activities there.
- 1.11 Describes the Soviet entry on June 15, 1940, and the changes in the school teaching as of September 1940. Marxism and Yiddish instead of Zionism and Hebrew. The war outbreak one year earlier made them apprehensive, but most refugees from Poland went to Vilna and not Kovno. With the Soviet entry, Zionist youth movements were underground. Father's business was confiscated and the apartment had to be vacated. So, the family returned to their hometown, but he remained to finish school.
- 1.20 Tells how he and others refused to participate in class held on Passover, risking NKVD investigation. Their bravery was written up and remembered years later.
- 1.40 He was not aware of incidences of anti-Semitism, personally, until the communists' entry. Before, there was hardly any contact with non-Jews.
- 1.49 Describes his routine activities while the Germans entered Kovno (June 23, 1941). Those who left did so hoping to join the Russian side. He preferred to stay with friends. Small package from his hometown was his last contact with his own family.
- 2.00 July 1<sup>st</sup> decree ordered all Kovno Jews to congregate in Slobodka suburb; the Germans' atrocities and exploitative behavior drove most to go there even before the deadline. He joined a high school friend's family. Describes the terrible first period there, ghetto institutions, procedures for work permits, living arrangements, his own work digging ditches and how starvation was eased by food smuggling from the outside.
- 2.09 Underground activities and Judenrat/Eltestenrat – activities of Zionist youth movement members and other groups. Talks about the important difference between the above Jewish institutions. Refers to Dr. Elkes and other Jewish leaders.

- 2.18 Describes the Great “Aktzia” of October 28, 1941 – the decree to gather at “Democrat Square” separating 10,000 (a third of all Jewss) for “resettling” but later found out it was for extermination.
- 2.27 The next two years were a time of relative calm that enabled developing various defensive plans: (a) digging bunkers and escape ditches in which he participated (Ilka Greenberg and other Jewish police commanders mentioned); (b) arms training (2.34 – Passover celebration in 1942 described); (c) hiding among gentiles (rare and for the lucky few); and (d) joining partisans.
- 2.45 Describes in detail his joining a group of 25 to escape and join the partisans in Moriavka (Budkoo forest)??; strategies and tactics.
- 2.55 October 26, 1943, “Aktzia Estonica” delayed their escape. Who participated; irregularities and distrust; four days walk until most were caught by the Lithuanian police (November 9<sup>th</sup>).
- 3.20 “Yellow prison” in Kovno – landed there December 1<sup>st</sup>. Describes the terrible conditions, the Gestapo interrogations, beatings, return to ghetto, partial release and escape (possible “arrangement” with police?)
- 3.38 The worst “Akzia” on March 27, 1944, involved police and children. All leadership was killed (Fort Nine). Describes digging hole to hide ghetto archives (which were never found later, including during his trip there two years ago). Describes digging an escape tunnel that collapsed; caught in the bunker.
- 3.52 Arrived at Lansberg-Bei-Liech concentration camp (near Munich) in July 1944. Describes the camp, barracks, Kapos, living conditions. Gets pneumonia (January 1945) and is treated with a pill. Underground groups’ activities continued (including the “Nitzoz” leaflet).
- 4.00 Escape from train to Dachau – April 1945, as allies approached and Germans planned to obliterate the camp.
- Tape 2 of 2
- 4.03 Some corrections to his reflections and elaboration on state of mind during earlier experiences, especially the experience of mourning. Attempt to keep family history.
- 4.25 Passover seder at Lansberg camp. Describes how they saved a loaf of bread and divided it into 18 parts.
- 4.28 Transfer to Dachau – April 1945, they were told they were being transferred when they were ordered to get on a train with their minimal belongings. They expected extermination, as they knew little else. The Front was approaching at this time.

- 4.35 Jumped from the train during Allied bombardment and escaped into the woods. Walked with other escaped friends until they met an American army on April 28, 1945. Describes how they lived during the first month, roaming through Lansberg looking for housing, plundering stores for clothes and food. Talks about the Germans they met.
- 4.49 Describes how he did not talk about his experiences for 50 years, until 1991 when his granddaughter asked him. The importance of not giving up hope and the unlimited ability to suffer.
- 4.58 Recuperation at St. Totilian (???) and contact with the Jewish Brigade – his health and state of mind improved. Excitement about meeting with soldiers of the Jewish Brigade (July 1<sup>st</sup>) and crossing illegally to Italy.
- 5.04 Discusses again his experiences in the concentration camp, his and others' state of mind, the importance of underground activities and social contacts in preserving one's hope and motivation to survive. Compared these with the life in the ghetto.
- 5.24 Describes where refugees gathered in Italy (Treviso) and his transition from prisoner to free person. He moved to a youth camp in Santa Maria di Bani where young people were being prepared for immigration to Palestine. He became a youth group leader. Three months of this positive experience until he boarded the boat for Israel.
- 5.29 He reached Haifa on November 9, 1945, the last boat of legal immigrants. Describes how the arriving refugees were sorted according to political party affiliations. Describes some of his experiences, continued to train refugee youth and eventually ended up on Kibbutz Tel-Yizhak.
- 5.36 His brother contacted him from Italy and eventually immigrated to Palestine and established family and business. They were the only survivors of their family.
- 5.42 Returns to his initial experience in Santa Maria di Bani where he first became a youth leader and his continuing such work upon his arrival in Palestine at Magdiel's Mosinson Institute. He describes the educational aims of this work, how they tried to achieve them, and the importance of understanding the particular difficulties of these youth. Both his Hebrew schooling and underground experiences helped him in this work.