

RG-50.120 #105

Meres, Itzhak

- 1.00 Born 8 Oct. 1932 in Kelm [phonetic] in Lithuania. Father was head of a Jewish bank. Older sister. Mother very religious – her father a rabbi. Went to a Jewish school, where Yiddish was language.
- 1.03 Germans came into Kelm soon after the war began. Town was burned – from fighting and bombing. Many families stayed with Jews in rural areas nearby. Germans later rounded Jews up and sent to Mazhuny – a small town, where a camp or ghetto established. Says his memory not clear. Recalls only separate incidents.
- 1.09 Father kept with most other men in Kelm, where they were taken on work details. Father later killed.
- 1.13 In July 1941, women and children taken to a huge barn, from where they were taken out in groups and shot. Meres, mother and sister were in last group. They were on their way to the ditch when they were told to return to barn. Later, younger children – including Meres and sister – were kept behind, and others – including mother were shot.
- 1.17 Meres and sister helped by Lithuanian women who had been family maid. Other children in barn divided up and put in care of various Lithuanian families.
- 1.22 No explanation why Jewish children allowed to live. When Jew in nearby ghetto heard that Meres children, whose grandfather had been a rabbi, had been adopted by Lithuanians and had been christened, they took them into the ghetto – Meres says to ‘save their Jewishness’.
- 1.24 Meres and sister run from ghetto – to avoid future ‘pogroms’ and to avoid Jews who wanted to keep them there. Return to Lithuanian woman.
- 1.25 Describes efforts of Lithuanian woman and husband to hide them. Handed from one family to another. Meres taken in finally by Lithuanian family who had 6 children of its own. Stayed until 1947 as full-fledged family member. Kept in touch with sister who was taken by another family.
- 1.35? Discusses life with Catholic family – going to church, learning to pray.
- 1.45?
- 1.48 Discusses mood of childhood – parents killed, religion suddenly changed.
- 1.52 Soviets liberated Kelm in Oct. 1944.
- 1.54 Discusses post-war years.

[Break]

- 2.00 Continues talking about post-war period. Education, some jobs. Married 1955. Sent to Vilnius to work as engineer. Also began to write poems, fiction.
- 2.06 Discusses difficulty of writing about Jewish themes.
- 2.16 Discusses interest in writing about Jewish resistance, and his novel “Zheltiy Loskut’ [Yellow Rag] about life in the Vilnius ghetto.
- 2.28 Discusses life in Israel, where he arrived in 1972.

END OF TAPE