

RG-50.120 #114 4 Tapes  
OFEN, MENACHEM

TAPE I

- 1.02 Mencahem Ofen was born in Dembitza near Krakow. He was an only son of middle class family. His father had a egg export business. He spoke Yiddish at home and fluent Polish. Family was religious. He went to Cheder.
- 1.06 1935 pogrom in high school. Jewish kids were beaten. Strong anti-Semitism after Pilsuski's death.
- 1.08 Zionism at home. He was member of 'Hashomer Hadati' [religious youth movement]. Describes youth movements in town.
- 1.27 Reasons for father's reluctance to immigrate to Palestine. Other family members did go.
- 1.33 Jews from Ziebice are expelled. What they knew about the fate of German Jews.
- 1.35 After Ribentrop Molotov agreement there was war in the air. He enlisted in Polish army.
- 1.47 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 1939, Jews are enlisted into army. Describes heavy bombardments with outbreak of war. Germans entered town Sept. 8.
- 2.05 9 Sept. '39, Kristalnacht in Poland. Burning of all Jewish cultural institutions. Bombing of Synagogue in Tarnow.
- 2.07 Anti Jewish laws in town. Head of Judenrat was Toia Zucker who ahd to give lists of names for work quotas. He was snatched to work. Describes curfew, yellow badges and non existing offical Jewish life.
- 2.24 He organized underground Yeshiva in his attic. Religious and spiritual resistance until summer of 1942.
- 2.35 At the end of 1942 all Jews went into ghetto in poor section of town. Describes difficult life and efforts to keep an underground Jewish life.
- 2.48 June 1941. German propaganda when war with Russia strated. Describes despair when Russia was close to defeat. Those who took Russian offer to retreat with them went to Tashkent.
- 3.03 End of 1941 they heard of killings by Einstatzgruppen. 3000 Russian POWs were executed.

- 3.10 Describes his work cleaning German trains.
- 3.15 March 1942. All Jews in Mielec were killed. Describes. They knew they would be next.
- 3.19 May 15. Action in Tarnow. Actions in surrounding villages.
- 3.24 July 21. They were ordered to appear in Sammelplatz. Selection, some were transported, the sick and old were killed in the woods. He was sent to labor camp.
- 3.38 He was sent to Czechowice to work in the airplane factory. Describes work conditions, life in work camp and his state of mind.

## TAPE II

- 4.03 Describes airplane factory, work and treatment.
- 4.10 Religious life in camp, food, mutual help.
- 4.28 What they knew about Auschwitz, Treblinka and the war.
- 4.37 Punitive actions.
- 4.46 Escape attempts.
- 5.00 Last days in Czechowice, escape plans; 35 escaped.
- 5.08 Russians advance and his outfit was moved to Plachov. Describes hell in Plachov. Describes SS man Gat[?] and his dog. From Plachov he is sent to Walewskie to work in salt mines.
- 5.19 Talks about head of Judenrat in Dembitz, Imergluck. He became a collaborator. Describes his activities and his end.
- 5.27 Describes camp Flossenbug, work and treatment. Was sent from there to Mulhausen. Describes trip to Kolmar and then by foot to Urbiss [?]. Describes work in tunnel.
- 5.39 Fall of 1944. Advance of the front. Yom Kippur in camp.
- 5.46 Escape attempt and punishment.
- 5.50 Transported by train to Berlin, Oranienburg and then Sachsenhausen. Tortuous treatment, severe cold.

- 5.55 He was sent to Braunschweig. Herman Goering, factories where 3 million foreigners worked. He worked in the bomb department. He injured himself, went to hospital and from there to Nevgammer[t?].
- 6.05 Describes transport and incident with Russian POW. Talks about his illness in Dec. and January 1945. A group from Norway who could not adapt, died,
- 6.14 Was transported to Bremen to submarine factory. Describes period from Jan-April.
- 6.22 When front advanced the factory was closed and they were taken by train to Bergen Belsen. Met a group of Hungarian Jews in Kastner's exchange program.
- 6.28 Describes Bergen Belsen, arrival treatment, Block 12, kapo's. His work was to drag the dead to pits.
- 6.43 April 15, 1945. Describes liberation by British. The first days, food and deaths associated to eating fat. Jewish chaplain brings help.

### TAPE III

- 7.04 1<sup>st</sup> week of liberation. Burning of Bergen Belsen and transfer to SS camp in Bergen Describes camp, his illness with typhoid and recuperation.
- 7.15 Psychological symptoms of survivors.
- 7.19 Moral decline in camp. He decides to leave with a group of friends, leave for Redwig.
- 7.31 Describes arrival in Sweden and threatment there. He was in Helingport, Melee and Malmee.
- 7.39 Were sent, as Polish citizens to North Sweden. They rebel and he and friends leave for Redwig.
- 7.48 Describes his life as a free man in Redwig. Met his future wife.
- 7.52 2 youth groups, Bnei Akiba and Hechalutz organized preparation training for Israel [Hachshara]. His group of 20 religious train for agricultural work from Dec. 1945 – summer '46. Went south to Kronstadt.
- 8.00 His group splits and he organizes new religious group. Describes work and life in commune.
- 8.16 Relationships between Swedes and Jewish girls.

- 8.19 He is leader of his group, teaches Judaism.
- 8.25 Gunter Korn organized illegal immigration. Jan. 1947 his group, under the leadership of Lova Eliav, start their trip to Israel, by train to Tralebev and then by boat from Le Havre. Describes difficult voyage.
- 8.44 Struggle with British soldiers who take them to Cyprus.
- 8.56 Describes camp life in Famagusta.
- 9.12 He gets to Atlit accompanying Youth Aliya children organized by Hans Beit. Then to his aunt in Tel Aviv, later to teachers college in Kfar Batia.
- 9.24 Worked in Kfar Haroeh teaching children from Youth Aliya. Describes his work. Marries.
- 9.39 Testifies in Memingen at the trial of Esta.
- 9.58 His feelings about seeing Germany prosper.

#### TAPE IV

- 10.06 Discusses his religious faith during and after the Holocaust.
- 10.35 His struggle with the religious leadership who did not see what was coming.
- 10.40 His take on various rabbinical decisions taken during the war, such as giving transport lists to the SS.
- 10.45 His religious and political messages.