RG-50.120 #0132   2 Tapes
GUSTAV SCHAUMBURGER

1.02   Background: He was born on Dec. 6, 1925 in the small town Boka near Chernovitch in Bukovina. His father was a textile merchant. The family was traditional-observant. He was oldest of three children. He describes the multinational composition of his town, where relationships were harmonious until verbal antisemitism started after 1933/34. He went to elementary school plus 'cheder' in the afternoon, then sent for 4 years of gymnasium in Chernovitch. He describes how in 1940 the Russians took back Bukovina, Germans retreated, how it affected daily life. Father was detained for a while, then all moved to Chernovitch. Economic hardships.

1.24   Outbreak of war: Describes the changes that occurred with the war's outbreak. He left school after 8th grade. In May/June '41, with the Russians leaving, Jewish leaders and all Boka residents were shot by Rumanian police and local residents [Ukrainians, Gypsies]. Many synagogues were burned. [But the Jews of his mother's village were rescued by Moldavian residents.] Describes the difficult times and anxiety of that period. Less killing in Chernovitch [70% Jewish] but within a few weeks most Jews were ordered to move to a prescribed ghetto area.

1.53   Life in Chernovitch ghetto: Described the three months they spent in that ghetto. Foraging for and bartering food; Rumanian guards; how their parents coped. The ghetto shrunk through frequent transports out.

2.13   Transfer to Mohilev-Podolsk: Describes the long and crowded train travel; being herded in the mud along the Dnieper river; their valuables and documents taken away. After barge river crossing the family settled into a neglected building of old army camp near that town. Describes cold and food conditions. Younger brother was skillful in obtaining food.

2.28   Illness and death: In December he got typhoid and spent two months in isolation hospital, where no medicine was available. During this time his mother died, and his siblings and father were sick too. While they recovered his father deteriorated in spirit, though things became easier in the summer. His brother excelled in bartering and supported the rest of them, also working for soldiers at the post. They moved to another building which he didn't leave during the entire harsh '42/43 winter because he had no shoes. Some help came from neighbors and Jewish community 'officials', but his father died in March '43. When the sons took off his thick sweater [which hadn't been taken off for two years],
they
found his body practically eaten away by layers of lice. The corpse was then carted away without a funeral.

3.07   How the three children lived alone: Somewhat easier existence during the summer. Describes the trading of food and merchandise at border [between Rumanian Ataki and Ukrainian Mohilov-Podolsk] in which local peasants, soldiers and ghetto Jews were involved and where brother excelled. He obtained work on rebuilding of river bridges.

Jewish ghetto leadership distributed cheap burlap clothes instead of good quality ones they had received from the Red Cross and then sold. Describes their daily life, food, being 'adopted' by a shoemaker's family [who were soon returned to their town Derohoy - which was not in Bukovina - by Rumanians who felt the war's end was near].

3.28   Leaving with siblings and separating from them: Joint organization arranged for many children to be sent to Romania orphanages. He initially succeeded to join his siblings but as a 16 year old was later forced to leave the train and return to the ghetto. Describes hardship, fear and longing.

3.36   Liberation by Partisans: Germans started retreating [March'44] partisans came from the woods, bombed river bridges and attacked Sondercommandos so they left. Partisans distributed arms. Ghetto conditions improved but Soviets did not allow return to Chernovitch.

3.43   Red Army service: He was recruited into the Red Army and sent to build airport in Belarus. Describes how his attempted escape to Chernovitch ended in jail sentence, but with the option to be freed if he joined the fighting units and were to be wounded in action [?]. The army was disorganized.

3.59   What happened to his siblings: He first heard about his siblings in 1948. They had been sent to orphanages in Romania but his brother soon escaped with the sister, illegally, to Palestine, where they have been living since 1946. Their first meeting was in 1966 when his sister visited Chernovitch. Explains why.

TAPE II

4.07   Red Army experiences: Returns to describe his military experiences, his training in topography, rising in rank, translating from German documents, becoming an instructor. A minor wound freed him from the threat of the old punishment, which was re-discovered only in 1947. Describes the attitude towards Jews in the military and his work in counter-intelligence.

4.22   Life in Chernovitch: Describes his life in Chernovitch: studying, becoming a teacher, marriage and children. Several visits from his siblings since 1966.

4.25   Moving to Israel and talking about his holocaust experiences: Describes settling in Israel: talking to his students about his experiences for the first time and its impact; talking to his children. He talks about the meaning of survival, and how he and each of his siblings coped, separately. He summarizes his current belief in the importance of telling about the holocaust experiences for future generations. He has provided testimony at Yad-Vashem; visited Mohilev-Podolsk. Despite the importance of Jewishness he explains how risky it was when living in the soviet areas to have contacts with Israel and how afraid they were to lose jobs and worse. Lived a 'split life' there.

4.51   Jewish community: Describes the Jewish community while in the ghetto and its leaders. Instances of corruption, catering to 'important' people. Limited contact with rabbis or

local Jewry.