

RG-50.120 #0137 2 Tapes
SHLOMO SHAPIRA

TAPE I [to 0.18]

- 0.01 Background: He was born in Warsaw in 1924. His father was a Yiddish writer, who tragically did not believe in the war to the extent of returning from a year in Argentina in 1938. They spoke Polish at home and were not observant. He joined Hashomer Hatzair youth movement. Describes his friendship with Israel Guttman. The family was well off, mostly due to mother's business manufacturing women's clothes. Describes the differences between his two-year older brother and himself, was the less idealistic one. Describes their living environment in Warsaw, the poverty of many Jews, the schooling in elementary and vocational schools.

TAPE II

- .0.19 War outbreak: They barely believed it til the terrible bombing. Describes life in the shelter, the Germans' entry. Youth movement was meeting underground. Describes 'Operation Barbarosa' and life in the ghetto during '41-'42: death from hunger, Typhoid, organizations trying to help and speculators. His own life as a 16 year old.
- .0.34 Deportation: As of June 22, '42 Germans posted notices about 'Aussiedlung' to the east, requiring daily quotas. There was a sequence starting from the sick and helpless [including Korchak and his orphans] to those less so. Jewish and Polish police helped in the search. Describes his own repeated hiding, and killing a threatening Jewish policeman. Father was caught and disappeared in Treblinka. He volunteered to work to escape Warsaw.
- 0.42 Labor camp and escape: He was sent to Sportschule airport near Warsaw, and describes his work and the Luftwaffe as relatively decent and ignorant. Received letter from his brother in Tarnow which prompted him to escape, posing as a Polish Christian. Describes his escape and how he obtained false documents. Parted from his brother [who remained to work for the Movement] and continued his escape to Chenstochov and Krakow.
- 1.01 Investigation and imprisonment: Describes how he aroused suspicion as a Jew, his documents were taken, he was beaten up cruelly by the Gestapo even after confessing ['the Germans need for order'], then sent to Jewish prison in Krakow. The prison is described as a 'warm' place where they shared food while waiting for deportation.
- 1.20 Deportation and escape: He describes the terrible and crowded conditions in the train car. He was determined to escape as he suspected they were sent to death camps. He pried open the bars on a window and jumped out onto the snow. Hiding, then walking back to Tarnow, he met his brother and got some new documents. Never saw his brother again.
- 1.33 Life and work as a farm worker: Describes in detail a prolonged period where he worked as a farm hand at various small villages, hired by gentile Polish farmers on the basis of old membership in an agricultural organization and earlier connections. He moved from place to place either because the work was unfamiliar and too difficult, or he was

suspected to be a Jew. Yet some simple people were helpful. Spent three years in this life, no contact with Jews, did not know about the Warsaw revolt. During this period also:

- 1.44 His mother came to be with him, then returned to Warsaw.
- 2.12 He saw a transport of Jews being sent to Sobibor.
- 2.21 Describes how he obtained new documents.
- 2.39 Liberation: Describes his initial encounter with Russian soldiers, going to Warsaw and seeing the destruction and miserable life. Returned to the farm to work and recuperate until the summer of '45.
- 2.53 New life in Warsaw: Describes his return and connecting with old and new people [Greenhaus, Annilevitch, Guttman]. Reestablishing his old identity through life and work with Zionist youth; living in a communal arrangement and preparing for aliyah to Palestine.
- 3.09 Renewed contact with mother: While preparing for aliyah in Warsaw, he received a letter from his mother whom he hadn't seen for three years. Went to see her in Breslau. Describes their meeting and relates what she went through during the past war years. Took his mother with him to Warsaw and they started wandering south towards Vienna and Munich.
- 3.29 Life in Ferenwald refugee camp: they landed in that camp which was a well equipped place originally serving Hitler Youth. UNRRA provided food and housing was adequate. There were courses for young people and he learned carpentry. He established contact with uncle in USA who sent him affidavit. But the Zionist Party was dominant in the camp and did not favor people going to America. Illegal immigrants to Palestine at that time were detoured by the British to Cyprus, so they waited in Germany. He describes the full life in the camp, the new exchange-rate economy and black market, their living arrangements, learning and entertainment. Did not then talk about their past war experiences. Were 'afraid like hunted animals', unlike the Christians. More concerned where to go.
- 3.49 Immigration to Israel: Arrived in the summer of '48. Describes the Pardell-Hanna camp and its disappointment. Moved to Tel-Aviv, through connections, worked and obtained an apartment in Yaffo. Served in the Army but could help his mother. Set up his own business, married and became successful eventually. A prolonged visit to the states enabled him to return to Israel satisfied with his choice.
- 4.02 The past: Talks about the past being part of him, can't erase. Tells about his several trips to Poland but can't explain their attraction. Hopes to keep in touch with the few who survived who shared some of his past.

