

RG-50.120 #138 7 Tapes

SHAPIRA, JOSEF [He is one of the group described in the book "The Cigarette Sellers" by Joseph Ziemian.]

TAPE I

- 1.006 Josef Shapira [Szpiro] later nicknamed Conky, was born in Warsaw 28/8/30, the third of 6 children. Describes religious family. He went to cheder. Father owned small store. Gives examples of anti-Semitism.
- 1.05 1939, outbreak of war. Describes air attacks. His building was burnt and all belongings lost.
- 1.11 Describes how anti Jewish laws affected family who made living dealing in black market of food.
- 1.37 November 1940, establishment of ghetto. Describes ghetto and more of his family there.
- 1.50 Describes hunger in ghetto and how he and sister smuggled in food from the outside.
- 2.24 Different smuggling operations by children.
- 2.48 Illness and death of young sister. He is near death of starvations until his aunt saves him.
- 3.08 Fate of father and young brother. He gets typhoid and is taken to hospital and then works there.
- 3.21 Describes first 'action' in ghetto.
- 3.34 He escaped the ghetto to a village and hid out at the house of an old peasant woman.

TAPE II [½ hour tape]

- 4.01 Talks about hunger influencing their behavior.
- 4.16 He was caught and detained in jail of Jewish police in the ghetto.
- 4.29 Talks about friend and sibling relationships.

TAPE III

- 5.00 Describes his homeless existence on the streets outside the ghetto. The culture of the children on the streets, how they subsisted and how they were chased.
- 5.15 describes being discovered. His sisters' survival on the streets.
- 5.25 'Work groups' [Plasuwka], and buying and selling food for other Jews in hiding.

- 5.35 Finding shelter in the apartment of a Polish woman. Her story.
- 6.09 Continues describing the 'work groups' and his life. Describes extortionists who demanded money for not revealing that they were Jews.
- 6.14 He works for group that plunders synagogues and abandoned apartments in the ghetto, selling abandoned belongings.
- 6.20 January 1943, second 'action' in ghetto and first signs of resistance.
- 6.28 April 1943, third 'action'. Describes moving frequently for security reasons.
- 6.40 Stories about extortionists.
- 6.53 Third and last 'action', destruction of ghetto and hunting of Jews.
- 7.10 He hires out as a shepherd to a peasant in the village Shivek.
- 7.15 Describes difficulties surviving the hunger in Warsaw and extortionists.
- 7.39 Talks about Bolush, Jacob Michael, and Hochman.
- 7.47 Describes his trip to the village to work for a peasant and his difficulties at work.

TAPE IV

- 8.02 Participates in religious services of peasants.
- 8.14 Peasants train him for work with animals. Describes pastoral life.
- 8.30 Rumors spread about his Jewishness and he runs away to another village to work.
- 8.42 Contact with Russian POW.
- 8.45 Contact with other shepherds and an incident at work.
- 8.54 He is roaming the villages looking for work. He is caught by a Volksdeutsche but released later.
- 9.02 He has hard time finding farm work in the winter, ends of working in the village store.
- 9.15 He is chased by German soldiers but escapes.
- 9.30 He boards a train to Warsaw, describes Warsaw, and the old house where he had stayed before which had become a German residence.

- 9.50 He meets old friends who are now selling cigarettes on the streets and he joins them.
- 10.01 He describes the cigarette trade and the group of kids involved in it.
- 10.18 Describes life and dangers of the cigarette trade.
- 10.30 Describes where they slept and ate. Difficulty in finding new shelter from time to time.
- 10.55 Describes trading with Hungarian soldiers, befriending Polish kids, and staying near a center for German soldiers.

TAPE V

- 11.01 Describes playing football with Hitlerjugend. Living in the “Three Crosses Square”, and defending their territory.
- 11.15 Describes getting caught by Polish police and getting out after 3 days in jail.
- 11.39 Dangers of black marketing.
- 11.43 Talks about other boys in the group [mentioned in the book].
- 11.49 Contact with the Jewish underground who found hideouts for the boys and financially supported them.
- 12.01 Meeting a member of the underground. Moral and financial support of the underground.
- 12.27 He is left alone to trade on the ‘square’. Other children sell on trains and villages.
- 12.41 Trades agricultural products from the village on the black market in Warsaw.
- 12.47 Train searches and retributions by Germans.
- 12.58 He was liberated by the Russians in Sept. 1944.
- 13.01 He goes by train to Zbirek and then back to Warsaw.
- 13.17 Describes being caught in crossfire between Germans and Polish revolt. The revolt was crushed.
- 13.24 He subsisted stealing food, living with a Polish family.
- 13.35 He Polish host organized robbing abandoned houses of Volksdeutsche.

- 13.50 Describes withdrawal of Germans to the west. Intense bombings by the Russians and liberation.

TAPE VI

- 14.00 He finds Jews among Polish soldiers from the resistance army, who send him to Lublin where the 'Joint' was based.
- 14.21 Describes Lublin and his feelings of estrangement and homelessness and returns to Warsaw. He found shelter at the Red Cross and went back to trading.
- 14.39 He met Danilowa from the Jewish Council, who took him to the Jewish Childrens' home. Describes life there.
- 14.46 Describes attacks by Polish antisemites and the fascist underground.
- 15.06 He has appendicitis and enters the catholic hospital.
- 15.11 Conditions and life in the children's home.
- 15.16 The trial and execution of 6 guards from Mydanik.
- 15.32 He was sent to hospital in Lodz and was operated.
- 15.44 Describes the Jewish Children Home in Lodz and preparations for aliya to Palestine.
- 15.50 Their train trip over borders to the French zone.

TAPE VII

- 16.01 Describes activities in DPC in Germany. He was in a group of children aged 12-15 from 1945-1947.
- 16.19 Describes trip to France to a camp near Marseilles where he stayed for 6 weeks.
- 16.25 Describes trip on the Theodore Herzl boat which was caught by the British. They were taken to Cyprus.
- 16.48 Describes life and activities in camp in Cyprus.
- 17.12 November 29, when the state of Israel was declared, all the youth were released and sent to Israel. He was taken to Haifa, then Atlit and finally to Kibbutz Maanit to a youth aliya group.
- 17.19 Describes his life in Maanit.

- 17.27 Describes attack of Arabs on the kibbutz.
- 17.30 The arrival of two of his sisters in Israel.
- 17.36 The contact between the 'cigarette sellers' after the war.
- 17.40 The attitude of Israelis to survivors and how it affected him.
- 17.50 Recurring dreams and memories.