

RG-50.120 #0140 4 Tapes
ZEEV SHEINVALD

TAPE I

- 1.00 Background: He was born in July '21 in a small town near Warsaw, second of seven children. A third of 15 thousand residents were Jews, most living in poverty and primitive conditions. His father traded between peasants and city, on horse and cart. Describes anti-Semitism. Observant home, children learning in 'cheder'. Describes his parents, sick mother, grandfather lived with them, his older brother served in the Polish army. Zionist parties in town. He was member of 'Betar' youth movement and aspired to go to Palestine. No money for ticket, or for secondary school. As of age 18 took care of arthritic mother.
- 1.56 Outbreak of war: Describes their first reactions and belief they could manage with the Germans. The family escapes to Warsaw; their house burned during bombardment. Subsequently returning to Sochachewa.
- 2.23 Judenrat: Describes the beginning of Jewish organization for self-care [which later became the Jundenrat]. Older brother returns from service and works for Germans. Both attempt to escape to Bialistok and elsewhere, but return repeatedly. Very difficult. Parents and other siblings' situation. Brother goes to labor camp, no food. Expelled from Suchachewa by February '40.
- 3.03 In Ghetto Warsaw: Describes cramped living conditions, father selling family valuables for food. He walks to Sochachewa twice in search of food and work [for Germans], and returns to Warsaw. Starvation and nightly kidnapping. Mother urges them to escape.
- 3.21 Escapes out of ghetto: With friend, they escape into Arian section of Warsaw. Risks. Leave for villages.
- 3.33 Farm work in villages: He and his brother eventually found work helping Polish peasants [help shortage as many Poles were sent to work in Germany. Describes the different [neighboring] villages and families they worked for, some helpful some risky, receiving food and afraid of informers.
- 3.44 Family: No contact with ghetto after German attack on Russia. Were told father died. Brother brought father and youngest sister out, to small closed Jewish enclave nearby [Osaru Skalewsky?]. What he heard of his other siblings' fate.
- 3.50 Working for Polish peasants: Describes mis moving from one peasant house or village to another; his different relationships with them. In April '42 he was discovered by Polish police and arrested but freed by his farmer and escaped to the woods.

TAPE II

- 4.04 Working for peasants: Describes how he continued to work for a couple of peasants for

food, and they even helped him escape from captors since his work was needed. His brother did the same in a neighboring village, and they visited father [who was in the Jewish reserved area in a small town nearby] on Sundays, bringing him stolen food. The family was dispersed. Father was at the mercy of Jewish police who demanded that one son should go to labor camp. He and his brother argued, fearing the worst, but decided that he would go.

- 4.18 Labor camp Skazysko: Describes his arrival there with 70 people who started the camp at the beginning of '42 and living there until the second half of '44. This labor camp was made up of sections A, B and C. Compares his recollections with those of Felicia Kara'i and claims that 100,000 Jews were murdered there over the two years. Describes Jewish police as ruling within the camp, with minimal German interference. Does not remember Commander Gnatt[?] doing evil.
- 4.20 Describes their arrival, the barracks, the police [from Radom] and their rules, the work routine, being guarded by Ukrainians.
- 4.28 Describes their work producing electrical parts and tools for trains, heavy arms and ammunitions, mortars, etc. Production was important to German company so they were interested in preserving workers. Food adequate.
- 4.35 He was transferred to another part because of security, and worked with melting and cutting heavy steel beams.
- 4.39 Describes difficulty of work, freezing, and punishments and beatings by police.
- 4.43 Moved to 'Economia' camp. Better building. There he heard first about mass exterminations. Describes work during day and night shift; receiving clothes from ghettos, trading clothes for food.
- 4.49 Describes some of the worst people: commander Tepperman[?] who ordered his severe beating and his court marshal later in Dachau; Milstein the informer, and Tepperman's cruel deputy Kshepshisky[?] who tortured women.
- 5.04 Describes the work groups, how they managed daily requirements such as shaving, his advantage as among the camp 'founders'. Great turnover from death due to weakness [starvation and sickness] but not transports.
- 5.12 Describes his getting Typhoid and going to the hospital. Helped by group members to return to work so as not to be liquidated. Managed to avoid [15%] selections. Appell routines.
- 5.32 Underground in the camp, mostly Poles. Himmler's visit.
- 5.38 Describes distribution of clothes which arrived from transports, used in trade for food. Found money in boots.

- 5.46 Life within the group; interacting; religion unimportant; women's contributions to social life and their suffering.
- 5.58 Describes trip outside camp in truck for poisoning people - but their doors open.
- 6.04 Describes incidence of escape and the fate of those who tried.
- 6.08 Explains their importance as workers in explosive production camp as the Russians approached. The role of Alpert, the camp's civilian boss.
- 6.21 More about the underground. Mostly Poles who were not trusted. All were younger than 30. The desire to survive vs. heroism.
- 6.29 What they knew about the Warsaw revolt.
- 6.41 The food situation. Describes work situation and connections between camps 'C' compared to 'A', increased production of munitions as the Russians approached. Aware of news through loudspeakers and papers.
- 6.52 Camp was dismantled, with Jewish police still accompanying them. Only 10 of the original 70 who came with him survived. Describes earlier Red Cross visit.
- 7.00 Transfer to Buchenwald: Describes departure, travel and arrival in Buchenwald in April/May 1944, and what happened to those left. Jewish police with the three cruel men came with them.

TAPE III

- 7.09 Buchenwald: Describes their introduction into the camp by one of the Jewish 'residents', who promised them safety, their being led to shower and cleansing, none of which they trusted. 1800 taken to one barrack and told how to sleep. Describes the camp's composition and their daily routine.
- 7.22 'The Trials of Skazysko': He describes in detail how all those who came from Skazysko were asked to testify, in a staged trial, regarding the behavior of a number of their own policemen. A total of 13 were condemned to die from all three Skazysko camps. Among these were Milstein, Ksheshipsy and Tepperman [whom he describes earlier] against whom he testified, and whose death he describes. He is not sure who initiated these trials, as he was only interested in day to day survival. The Germans did not care. Altogether, he was in Buchenwald for two weeks.
- 7.49 Shlieben: He was transferred to Shlieben to work in the munitions factory. Describes the camp of 3000 people, of different nationalities, Hungarian Jews, his work routine. Spent nine months there. A bombardment which was thought to be Americans turned out to be sabotage, and 110 workers from his group who escaped into the woods were killed. It was impossible to repair the damage from the explosives. Moved to Fleysburg[?] with

Poles and Russians too. Work in forests, swamps, deteriorating state, starvation. Traded tobacco, clothes - anything for food. Deals with commander Becker. Two months there.

- 8.36 17-day transport: Spent the next 17 days with 110 people in on train car in terrible transport, slow, open only every three days, new people to replace daily corpses, stood at window and traded sugar and tobacco.
- 8.47 Mauthausen station: Got off near the Austrian border to work repairing bombarded trains, where they also found food.
- 8.58 Mauthausen: He describes arriving at the camp, 60 out of the original 2500, end of April. Describes barracks with 3-story bunks with daily collection of corpses, starvation, sickness. False rumor about war's end, on May 1st, leads to killing of 10000[?] inmates by watch-tower guards.
- 9.10 Liberation: He describes the Americans' arrival, May 5th. Those liberated cannot go, and have no place to go. Does not elaborate on events immediately following Mauthausen.
- 9.18 Epilogue: One year later he arrived in Haifa as a legal immigrant. He talks about his deep disappointment regarding his [and fellow survivors'] reception. They were not listened to, not accepted. All his family of origin perished. There is great bitterness, but he does not want to explain or elaborate on the events following liberations and arrival in Palestine because they are too personal. He became successful, well off financially. His wife died three years ago, his four children are doing well. One daughter is interested and involved in the history of the Holocaust and the family.

TAPE IV

- 10.07 Assorted corrections and thoughts: He returns with a number of corrections and describes how he went about these corrections. His entire family participated.
- 10.13 The correct date for expulsion from Sochchewa was February 15, '41. His last escape from Warsaw was end of April-May '41. Arrived in Stazysko at the beginning of '42. The correct street name for the Warsaw courthouse.
- 10.22 Elaborates on life in his home town of Sochachewa, especially the life of its Jewish population, before the war, during it and as refugees.
- 10.46 His one month as refugee in Bialistok. Compares being a refugee in Russia.
- 11.51 Describes the fate of children.
- 11.55 Describes hunger.
- 11.02 Elaborates on the painful issue of their passivity, presumed lack of heroism, 'allowing selves to be slaughtered', the tragic lack of leadership. Compared their lack of choices to the situation for the Poles.

11.20 End of testimony of Zeev Sheinvald

ERROR NOTE: At this point the tape continues with testimony by another person, obviously in the middle of the story. There are no identifying notes and there are no time codes anywhere. I did not attempt to transcribe it. Hava Bonne-