

Zeidel, Mordechai
RG-50.120.0177
2 video cassettes
June 25, 1993
Hebrew

Tape I

- 1:00 Mordechai Zeidel was born in 1926 in Svencionys near Vilnius. He had one brother and three sisters. He went to Tarbut school. First the Russians came and then, in 1940, the Germans. The family first escaped to camp Poligon and then returned to ghetto Vilnius.
- 1:06 When the ghetto was destroyed, some people were sent to Vilnius and others to Kaunas. Mordechai ran away but then returned to find his family gone. He hid with friends at Rudnitska 6. After 50 days the Gestapo discovered them. He was taken by truck to Ponary (Panerari) and worked cutting trees. Describes work conditions there.
- 1:15 Describes having to dig pits to burn the bodies from the mass graves.
- 1:22 Describes digging a camp tunnel. Twenty of his group escaped.
- 1:33 Describes burning corpses.
- 1:35 Describes planning the escape. Eleven went to the forest. Only three survived.
- 1:38 Describes work in the pit.
- 1:42 Talks about the killing of a group of Dutch Jews.
- 1:47 Describes his escape. A Polish peasant helped them and gave them directions. They joined a group of Jewish partisans, escaped an ambush and got to Rudnitska Pusha (Rudninkai forest) to Abba Kovner's unit.
- 1:57 Describes life with the partisans.
- 2:00 Describes an incident with two Poles they guarded and had to kill.
- 2:10 Describes incidents in Ponary and how the memories affect him.
- 2:14 Describes his village, the Tarbut school, and the synagogues. Three thousand Jews lived in his village. Describes life under the Russians. He was in Hechalutz, a youth movement, and learned about Israel.
- 2:20 Describes the entry of Germans into his village. His brother was caught and killed. His father was told that all Jews had to go to the ghetto or be taken to Poligon, where they were killed.

- 2:25 Mordechai's family escaped to Siewierz. Describes the town and the Judenrat and its functions. He was sent to work. Describes the town. He was taken to Ignalina near Svencionys. They prayed when they waited at home.
- 2:32 He was moved to Palimonas(?). Describes escaping from there and being caught by the Lithuanian police. Mordechai bribed the police and was let go to Vilnius.
- 2:37 Describes the conditions in Vilnius. He was taken to the orphanage, Internat. Describes his life and activities in Internat.
- 2:45 When the ghetto was liquidated, a friend took him to a *malina* – a place organized for hiding. He describes their hiding place – a closed cellar with water and bread.
- 2:51 They were discovered. Describes Kater, who was a sadist and took them to the Gestapo, where they remained for a week. Some were taken to Ponary and killed.
- 2:56 Describes the difficult conditions in the ghetto. He heard about the underground, but did not join.
- 3:05 Continues to describe the weeks in the Gestapo prison. During the day they worked outside cutting trees.
- 3:09 Mordechai's group was taken to dig ditches. They were chained and lived in underground bunkers. They had to take the dead from the ditches to the crematorium – four hundred bodies a day. After that they had to scatter the ashes.
- 3:16 He describes digging a tunnel from inside the bunker to the outside. The work was done at night.
- 3:31 Describes again the taking of dead bodies to the crematorium.
- 3:34 They dug a tunnel for four months. When they got out they were shot at, but escaped to the forest.
- 3:45 Describes people who were with him in the tunnel, how they removed their chains, and how they helped each other.
- 3:55 They received food from peasants who helped them.
- 3:57 They reached the partisans after two weeks and stayed in Rudnitzer Puscha (Rudninkai forest). Describes activities of the partisans' villages that collaborated and the Germans were burned. There were difficult relationships (with/and) Polish partisans.
- 4:04 He participated in the liberation of Vilnius.

Tape II

- 4:05 Describes participating in the battle to liberate Vilnius. After the liberation, he was recruited to the NKVD (Narodnyĭ Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del – People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs), the Secret Police. Describes his work for the NKVD.
- 4:11 Describes leaving to go to Palestine. He went to Lublin, from there to Bucharest and then to Budapest.
- 4:20 Describes the group he was traveling with. From Hungary, they went to Austria, and from there to Italy.
- 4:24 Describes the wonderful reception in Italy. From there they went by boat to Palestine. Describes the boat trip to Palestine.
- 4:27 Describes the reception in Palestine. When the war of independence started, he joined the army and was in the Givati unit. Describes his war experiences. He later got married.
- 4:34 Describes his difficult adjustment in Israel. He had three children and only told them about his experiences when they were in their teens.