

RG-50.120 #182 5 Tapes
ZIZAMSKI, ARIE

- 1.00 He was born in 1923 Prozany, in east Poland, in Brest-Litovsk (Brisk) district. Population 10,000, half of them Jewish. Talks about the history of the village. Father was manager of the estate of a Russian princess. Describes his childhood on the estate. Had a younger sister.
- 1.28 His education was in town. Went to Jewish school. Member of Hashomer Hatzair, youth group. Describes community life.
- 1.45 Experiences with anti-Semitism.
- 1.51 Cultural activities, youth movement, friends.
- 2.12 Father's work. In 1938 rise of anti-Semitism and father gets fired. Reaction of his family to the trauma.
- 2.20 Father moves out of town to manage a Jewish estate. He, mother and sister remained in town.
- 2.35 Social life in town. High school and work in youth movement.
- 3.05 Sept. 1939. Beginning of war. Germany attacked Poland. They joined father on the estate near Bialowieza. Arrival of refugees.
- 3.12 Russians entered - father now worked for them. The population received the Russians enthusiastically.
- 3.30 Changes under the Russians. Jewish schools and youth movements were stopped.
- 3.47 They were forced to leave their apartment and moved to Polish area. Rise of anti-Semitism and the cessation of Jewish political life.
- IV
- 4.00 The economic condition of the family deteriorates. He worked in building air fields near town.
- 4.07 Describes action by the NKVD against capitalists and Jews in 1941. Atmosphere of fear.
- 4.20 End of H.S. His hopes and plans with no premonition of what was to come.

- 4.29 Outbreak of war. Russian withdrawal, bombardment of Germans. Describes German entry.
- 4.39 Anti Jewish laws. Order to wear yellow patch. Atrocities.
- 4.50 Reflections on being a survivor and the difficulty talking about it.
- 4.57 Sept. 1941. Establishment of ghetto and Judenrat. Describes ghetto and functions of Judenrat.
- 5.11 Describes his work outside the ghetto.
- 5.16 1941-42. Prozany became the central ghetto for the surrounding villages and also for Bialystok and Brisk. Ghetto grew from 5000 to 10,000. Describes problems of food and health. Judenrat bribed Germans to save Jews.
- 5.23 1942. Talks to partisans and groups of young people who acquired weapons, and joined the partisans.
- 5.38 Nov. '38 heard about the destruction of other ghettos. Describes atmosphere in ghetto. 50 people attempted collective suicide but were saved.
- 5.53 Everyday life in the ghetto.
- 5.57 Jan. '43. Jewish partisans asked the Judenrat for medicines. They were discovered and as a result the SS emptied the ghetto. Describes his family getting ready. They were taken in cattle trains, 2500 people. Describes conditions on the train. They arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau after 48 hours.
- 6.19 Describes arrival and selection in camp. He is in a group with father. Describes barracks, showers, registration and kapos.
- 6.37 Talks about his feelings, finds out about crematoriums.
- 6.49 The torture of hard work and the dehumanizing effect of the treatment they got. Of the 1200 who arrived only a quarter remained. He was marched with the remainder to Birkenau.
- 6.59 Talks of the arrival of gypsies and Dutch Jews.
- III
- 7.03 3 more transports from his town arrived. The will to survive kept him alive.

- 7.12 He and father were taken to Auschwitz; they said that they were agricultural workers.
- 7.19 Describes the work commando. He was in the building unit. Describes cruelty of Jewish kapo. Father collapsed and was taken away. He never saw him again.
- 7.28 What being alone and responsible only for himself meant to him. His strong will to live.
- 7.38 In July he was transported to a secondary camp near an anti air craft factory. Describes camp.
- 7.45 Describes his work, treatment of SS and hunger.
- 7.57 Arrival of Russian POWs. He befriended one of them. In the fall of 1944 they started to talk about escape. 6 Russian officers, 2 Poles and himself. He was the only Jew. They called him Jurek.
- 8.15 The escape plan. They dug a tunnel under the camp. Describes the work.
- 8.36 After 2 months, in July, they escaped. He was on his own. Describes thoughts and feelings.
- 8.50 Describes hiding in a wheat field and in peasants houses. He passes as a non-Jew, a Polish patriot. People helped him.
- 9.16 Talks about his feelings during the escape. Walked for 5 weeks hoping to cross in Romania.
- 9.20 He is caught, taken to the police where they discovered he was an escapee.
- 9.30 He was taken to Bilitz and is interrogated by the Gestapo.
- 9.45 Describes prison. After one week he was sent back to Auschwitz.
- IV
- 10.08 In Auschwitz he is interrogated by Gestapo Boger who was known for his sadism.
- 10.31 After one week he is taken to Bona. He was admired and taken care of by other prisoners as one who escaped.

- 10.39 Sept. '44. Describes hanging of 3 who tried to escape.
- 10.42 He is returned to Auschwitz and interrogated again because another escapee Michalewsky had been caught. In Nov. he was sent to Birkenau and from there by train to Germany to work in a factory.
- 10.59 Describes the camp and work. Bombardments of camp and the march deeper into Germany. Soon afterwards the camp was liberated.
- 11.10 How Michalowsky was caught. Life in Buna.
- 11.14 His thoughts about being saved.
- 11.20 Talks about Hungarian Jews in Buna.
- 11.24 Describes Birkenau at the end. The execution of the Sonderkomando.
- 11.30 Life in the camp and factory work. At the end of March the camp was evacuated and they were taken to Buchenwald. He was there until April 4 and then taken by train 6000 people for 1 month train ride. Describes the horrors of it.
- 11.53 They arrived in Czechoslovakia. On the 9th of May the war ended and the SS vanished. Only 350 people out of 6000 remained. He had typhoid fever and stayed 4 weeks in a hospital.
- 11.56 He had no family left. Talks about his physical and mental state. Only when he started to plan going to Palestine did he feel liberated.
- 12.07 Describes hospital in Terezin and then DP camp and registration for repatriation.
- 12.17 He is in group that wanted to go to Palestine. Stories of people in the group.
- 12.26 In July his group went to Landsberg, in the American zone. Describes camp, preparation for the kibbutz, cultural life.
- 12.46 Daily routine and DP camp.
- 12.48 Ben Gurion visits camp. Different political parties and their recruitment efforts.

V

- 13.13 Life and people in DP camp.
- 13.20 1946 in Landsberg. Describes meeting. Polish neighbor from his town.
- 13.27 His group is taken in trucks to reach a port in France but is returned to DP camp in Bergen Belsen.
- 13.36 In Nov. they are taken again by 'Bricha' [escape] group in trucks to Italy.
- 13.43 Describes trip over the Alps to Villa Autia near Rome.
- 13.51 In 1947 they are taken by boat 'Morde Hagetaot' to Palestine. Describes their passage.
- 13.59 They are stopped by British boats to Cyprus. Describes camp and life there. He was chosen as leader of camp from April '47 - Jan. '49. Describes his job organizing 10,000 people.
- 14.15 How they adapted to life in Cyprus. The British gave 750 visas a month to Palestine and they arranged it on a first come, first leaves basis.
- 14.28 Life and activities in camp. Organized with the help of schlichim from Palestine.
- 14.41 Health and medical care in camp.
- 14.46 Nov. '47 Golda Meir came and negotiated the early release of women and babies.
- 14.50 Training activities of the Haganah in camp.
- 15.00 The camp radio station and feelings. When the UN decision of partition was announced.
- 15.10 Dec. '47. Describes arrival of 1500 Jews from Romania and Bulgaria.
- 15.18 Haganah with help of Greek fisherman arranged to smuggle people in small boats to Israel.
- 15.26 Meeting his wife and getting married in Cyprus.
- 15.31 At the urging of the sochnut he delivered a Habeas Corpus in court, demanding the release of all prisoners who were held without proper

cause.

- 15.48 At the beginning of 1948 the British government let everybody go. Boats from Israel came to transport them. Describes his feeling.
- 15.57 He arrived in Israel and went to Degania but left later. He served in the army and then made a home for his family. Describes his happiness.