

RG-50.120 #0252  
GULER, ISRAEL

- 1.00 Born 4 May 1930 in Khmelnik, Vinmtsa oblast. Town was heavily Jewish, with about 8-10,000 Jews.
- 1.04 Discusses family. He had younger brother. Grandfather and grandmother and great-grandmother lived with family. Family was fairly religious, especially the grandparents and great-grandmother. Father was the director of a book store. Grandfather worked as a boiler maker.
- 1.16 Discusses early life of parents. Parents and grandparents spoke Yiddish at home.
- 1.19 Israel's family lived quite well. Great-grandmother received US pension because a son had emigrated to the US and had been killed during WWI - as an American soldier.
- 1.25 Discusses great-grandmother who lived for a while in Palestine. Returned to USSR in 1929.
- 1.35 Continues talking about family background.
- 1.44 In 1937 Israel began school - a Ukrainian school. Director of school and many teachers were Jewish. Some of the teachers were Polish. Finished four classes by time war started.
- 1.55 Interviewer asks about famine in Ukraine in early 1930s. Israel said Jews - who were by and large trades people, artisans and not rural peasants - were better off than Ukrainians. But doesn't know any details. [He was only 2 or 3 years old.]

[Break]

- 2.00 Talks about events of 1939 and those leading up to beginning of war in USSR. In Sept. 1939 mobilization began. A regiment was based in Khmelnik. Israel's father drafted into local regiment. Regiment marched into Polish territory - Western Ukraine. At same time, Israel remembers, Polish Jewish refugees arrived in Khmelnik - those fleeing German occupation of the rest of Poland. They told of Nazi persecution. Local Jewish residents generally did not believe refugees - considered Germans civilized people.
- 2.05 Father was demobilized in 1940, prior to Soviet war with Finland.
- 2.09 Soon after Germany attacked USSR, Israel saw retreating Soviet troops and refugees passing through Khmelnik. Family tried to evacuate. Got places in a truck going to Kiev. Along the way, were under air attack. But arrived safely in Kiev. Stayed with friend of mother, Manya Shoarts. This was end of June.

- 2.12 Soviets controlled evacuation further east.
- 2.14 Father had stayed behind in Khmelnik. Family returned from Kiev to Khmelnik. Father then drafted in July and left with unit. Soon Khmelnik came under artillery attacks. Neighbors killed. Town soon fell to Germans.
- 2.20 First wave of German troops committed no excesses. German/Ukrainian administration established. Many Polizei were from Western Ukraine. Head of administration was a pediatrician, Dr. Mazaruk, who had a number of times treated Israel.
- 2.22 German engineering troops began to repair bridge. Called on Israel's grandfather to help with metal work. Gave family food. No maltreatment of Jews or others so far in occupation.
- 2.25 Soon, rules for Jews issued. Jews had to wear stars of David. Police took Israel's bicycle. In August, group of German 'Sonderkommandos' arrived in Khmelnik. Gathered all men of town. Took them away somewhere. Grandfather allowed to continue working in his metal shop.
- 2.30 Some men were able to hide. About 750, virtually all Jews, taken by Germans. Later found out that they were shot almost immediately.
- 2.35 In fall 1941, all Jews in area were ordered to move to old quarter of Khmelnik. Ghetto established. With permission, Jews could leave for short periods. Israel's grandparents and great-grandmother allowed to remain in old house.
- 2.39 Jews forced to harvest sugar beets. Rumors began to circulate that in nearby pine forest, POWs were digging ditches. Hearing this, many Jews began to prepare hiding places. In house where Guler staying, prepared large 3 room basement which had previously served as wine storage warehouse.
- 2.45 As of beginning of December 1941, there had been no shooting of Jews in ghetto.
- 2.48 Guler describes how he and other children used to run around streets, playing - as children will - going in and out of houses, disobeying various rules - sometimes getting caught and beaten. Children could more easily scrounge food for their families.
- 2.51 Israel's family had two radios. When people ordered to turn radio in they surrendered one but hid the other. Were able to listen to Soviet programs. Heard about US entry into war. Shortly thereafter, out of fear, threw radio in river.
- 2.55 On Jan 9, 1942, people in ghetto not allowed to go to work. Germans and police standing on ice of frozen Briz River, standing guard. Family decides to go to hiding

place. Israel runs to bring grandparents from their home to ghetto hiding place. On way he hears shooting. Tells grandparents and returns. House is searched. There were 20 persons in hiding place.

[Break]

- 3.00 Emerged at night. Found that all houses empty. People gone. Returned to hiding place. Stayed 4 days.
- 3.07 They heard Germans collecting things from houses. Food items, furniture.
- 3.08 Grandmother comes. Tells them not all people killed. Germans had organized a smaller ghetto. Family goes to live with grandmother. Grandmother told how Jews had been gathered in street - while Guler in hiding - gathered valuables, separated out artisans and people with special skills. Most Jews marched off to woods. Around 7,000 Jews killed.
- 3.16 On 16 Jan, 1942 Jews that were found in various hiding places and thus had managed to avoid 9 January massacre, were marched to the woods and shot. 1,600 shot.
- 3.19 Others worked at specialties [?]. Ghetto not surrounded by barbed wire. Children scrounged food - exchanging items.
- 3.21 Judenrat chairman was name Elzon. He was later killed although his son survived. Judenrat had to collect valuables. Almost daily, individual Jews shot.
- 3.23 Feb 1942 grandfather died - at age 63.
- 3.25 In summer 1942 various rumors about forthcoming massacres. Family tried to spend time out of ghetto when possible. Guler stays overnight with various Ukrainian families.
- 3.28 19 June 1942, ghetto was surrounded by Hungarians. People driven into square. Polizei, Germans there. Israel and younger brother separated from mother. Other children separated from parents.
- 3.36 Guler at this point decides to try to escape - leaving 7 year old brother and mother from whom he has been separated. Here, in his narrative, Guler discusses whether it was better for men to have gone submissively to their deaths. Trying to give some support to women and children who had no chance of escaping or resisting - or was it better for the men to somehow resist?
- 3.38 Guler managed to run and hide among crowd of people, found mother. Saw how other children were driven to woods to be killed. Rejoins mother in crowd. Police let women go home. Guler alone among children survived. 363 children perished.

- 3.44 Some remaining men were members of underground. Some Ukrainians who had been in underground and had contact with ghetto underground members were captured, but did not betray their ghetto colleagues.
- 3.47 Mother concludes that ghetto would soon be liquidated and decided to try to escape and go to southern area of Vinnitsa oblast where she heard that Romanian troops were the occupying force. She heard that Romanians were treating Jews better. Secured false document with Ukrainian identities, took train to Gayvoron intending to go south, but had to return to Khmelnik.
- 3.50 Tried again to go south - Dec. 1942 or Jan 1943. Grandmother stayed in ghetto. Began walking. Arrived near Romanian occupied territory. Ukrainian family gave them a place to rest, food. Next day crossed Birg River. Met a guide. Got food - went to Zhmerinka. Went to the ghetto, which housed Jews from Zhmerinka and Jews which Romanians had transported from Romania.
- 3.54 Jewish administration of ghetto expelled family from ghetto. Goes to Murafa. Knew some people there from Khmelnik. Lived there with a Ukrainian family until arrival of Red Army in March 1944.
- 3.56 Returned on foot to Khmelnik. Israel goes to school. In 1949 enters Kiev Aviation Institute. Graduates in 1954. In 1945 learned that father had been killed in war. Worked 3 years in Kazakhstan. Worked in aviation in Lvov. In 1991 emigrated to Israel.