

RG-50.120*0269 2 Tapes
KATZ, MENACHEM

- 1.01 He was born in Berezhany (Bzezan), Poland in 1925. The town had 3,000 Jews out of a population of 12,000 Poles and Ukrainians. He describes his family. His biological father, David Roth, died when he was 8 months old and he was adopted by his stepfather, Katz. He had two sisters. He went to a Cheder and then to elementary school. His father was a Zionist.
- 1.11 He belonged to the Noar Zioni [Zionist youth group]. Describes his activities.
- 1.15 Describes anti-Semitic incidents which increased towards 1939.
- 1.25 Sept. 1939, when war broke out. The atmosphere became very tense. Many Jews enlisted. After 2 weeks the town was taken over by the Soviets. Describes life under the Soviets. Jewish businesses were closed.
- 1.32 Talks about childhood and his involvement with synagogues and Zionist activities.
- 1.36 Life under the Soviets. He went for two years to a Soviet school. Describes his social life.
- 1.43 Describes town, facilities and Jewish population, his school and social life under the Soviets.
- 1.48 Describes the arrival of 12,000 Jewish refugees from western Poland, and their absorption.
- 1.58 Father started a small coffee and wine factory.
- 2.00 July 1941. Describes bombardment by Germans, their entry into town and the Soviet withdrawal.
- 2.11 Restrictions on Jews imposed by the Germans allowed Ukrainians to murder and plunder Jews as revenge for alleged killing of Ukrainian prisoners. His family escaped to the Christian area.
- 2.19 Jews were ordered to give up property.
- 2.21 His thoughts about resistance. He stayed in the factory which was in the Christian area and was friendly with the Ukrainian boss.
- 2.33 Describes the events of Yom Kippur. All Jews 28 and above were told to assemble. They were sorted into three groups by occupation: skilled workers, wealthy, educated. Six hundred orthodox people were taken out of town and killed. The others were taken to a work camp. The Judenrat was told that they would release people for 5 kilo gold, but nobody was released.

- 2.41 Kreis Hauptman Asbach gave an order to destroy Jewish homes and build a sports stadium instead. Grave stones from the Jewish cemetery were used to build it.
- 2.47 Women were also taken to forced labor, planting a forest but also to cook and clean.
- 2.51 A friend, Knoll, worked as a servant to the Gestapo and informed the Judenrat about impending events.
- 2.58 Describes the establishment of the ghetto, the responsibilities of the Judenrat. Some people had special permits to work outside.
- 3.01 Winter of 1941. Jews were ordered to shave their breads. Talks about Dr. Falk, who organized the ghetto hospital.
- 3.08 The Gestapo ordered groups of Jews to be transferred to another village because of the overpopulation of the ghetto. The Judenrat had to choose those to be transferred. Jews paid the Judenrat to bribe the Germans to take them off the list. The weak and poor were taken first. They were taken to the forest and shot.
- 3.17 He got a forged work permit to get out of the ghetto. Shows photos.
- 3.24 Spring 1942. The Jewish militia assisted the Germans in catching Jews to send to work camps. He escaped, then was imprisoned. His father used influence to release him. The others were taken to camp Kamionka-Sumerlova to work in a quarry and to pave the road from Kiev to Lvov.
- 3.29 Germans shot all who got typhus. A Jewish doctor saved many.
- 3.30 Women were taken to camp Jagielnica (Yahilnytsya) to work in sugar cane fields. The Judenrat made the arrangements for selection of individuals. There was a group of converts who were rounded up and killed.
- 3.39 August 1942. First transport to Belzec. Jews escaped and hid in bunkers. He also hid in bunker.
- 3.50 On Yom Kippur the Germans attacked the ghetto. He hid in a bunker near the factory.
- 3.54 Yankele Messer, from the Jewish militia, went with the Gestapo and gave away hideouts.
- 3.57 Describes a bunker with 30 people which was not discovered by Germans.
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- 4.00 Describes action by head of SS from Ternopil (Tarnopol), who came to town, and with the help of the Jewish militia got people out of bunkers and later to transports on trains.

- 4.08 Life in the ghetto after the action. The Gestapo transported small groups, on a weekly basis. The Gestapo received bribes to postpone the destruction of the ghetto. Dr. Simon Klarer, head of the Judenrat, was shot because he refused to sign false statements that Jews were taken to work camps.
- 4.12 On the 1st of February 1943, all Jews were returned to the ghetto and it was locked. Families sent members to peasants in nearby villages to hide out (they paid them). He too escaped with an uncle to the village of Mieczyniczow and built a bunker at a friendly peasant's house and then returned to the ghetto. [Shows photographs of people shot in the ghetto.]
- 4.22 October 1942. Last action. Describes people being taken to trains. He hid in bunker.
- 4.27 February 1943. Talks about rumors of destruction of the ghetto. Jewish population down to 3,000, from 12,000. Rumor that the Wehrmacht was preparing a work camp. People paid to be included.
- 4.31 June 1943. He and father went to the 'work camp'. Mother remained in ghetto. There were 350 people in the camp, mostly men [wrote a book about it].
- 4.40 Action to make the area 'Judenfrei'. The camp was locked. They saw the ghetto burning. Many in the camp committed suicide, taking poison, including his father. The poison was provided by the pharmacist and his wife.
- 4.48 Describes the tension and despair in the camp. The Ukrainian police took 300 people out and marched them to a cemetery, where they were shot.
- 4.58 He was the only one of 350 people in the camp who survived. Describes his escape.
- 5.10 Describes his escape to the bunker that he had built in a peasant's house, in the village Kuropatniki.
- 5.17 Pieter Kumetch took him in and hid him and went to bring his mother and sister, who he was told were hiding in the forest, and hid them too.
- 5.26 Two more people joined them in the hideout, the Vogelmann family. Describes life in the hideout. The peasant, his wife, and two daughters took complete care of them. After the war he had them listed with the 'Righteous Among the Nations.'
- 5.37 In the fall, they went from the hideout in the attic to the bunker because of searches. Describes difficult conditions with 8 people in small bunker. They decided to go to the forest.
- 5.44 Describes walk to the forest, building a bunker and difficult life in the forest. When the bunker collapsed under snow, they returned to the peasant who again took them in. When he got sick the peasant got him medicines from the nearby hospital.

- 5.56 He told the peasant of money he had hidden in the village. The peasant brought it to him and he gave him some money to help support them. Forty years later the daughters gave him the rest that had remained.
- 6.02 The peasant was killed by Ukrainians because he was a Polish nationalist. The widow continued to support them.
- 6.11 They went back to the forest and restored the bunker. Describes life in the forest. They got food by stealing from peasants.
- 6.23 They met other Jews from Berezhany (Bzezan) who were hiding in the forest and had weapons.
- 6.27 They organized, joined actions to get food and built a better bunker. Describes life routine.
- 6.41 Describes life in forest for 8 months and the various actions they took.
- 6.45 Summer. Describes liberation by Russians and return to village in July 1944, where no Jews remained. They were repatriated to Poland and then with Aliya Bet, to Italy.
- 6.53 After two years in a kibbutz in Italy, he went on a boat, the 'Bracha Fuld,' to Palestine. The British took them to Cyprus, where he stayed for 8 months. In 1947 he got to Palestine. He became an architect, raised a family and in 1991 wrote a book about his experiences.