

**LANG, Peter**  
**RG-50.120\*0376**  
**3 Tapes in Hebrew**  
**May 11, 2000**

**Abstract**

Peter Lang was born in August 1924 in Moravia, Czechoslovakia. His parents were atheists and the family was completely assimilated. He had an older sister, Lotte. Anti-Semitism forced him to leave public school and an apprenticeship, and go to Prague where he lived in a Jewish orphanage. In March 1939, when the Nazis took over Czechoslovakia, Peter's parents were evicted from their home and sent to a ghetto.

After Poland was taken, Peter returned home and was sent with his father to a forced labor camp, where they built train tracks. In May 1942, the family was deported to Terezin.

He describes their lives in Terezin, and managing to avoid transports until he and his father were sent to Auschwitz. Peter describes the sadism, and his despair and utter helplessness. He hid when his father was taken away and killed. Peter feels guilty that he did not go with his father. Two weeks later, he was marched to Birkenau to a Roma camp.

He describes the terrible hunger there, and what it did to them physically and psychologically. He feels good that he never stole from his friends. He mentions cannibalism.

In October 1944, he was sent to a forced labor camp near Kaufering, where he worked in construction. Then, he was sent to Leibnitz, where he worked in caves. He estimates that 30 percent of Leibnitz's 3,000 population -- Jews, Communists, homosexuals, and criminals -- died every month from dysentery and typhoid.

He was sent back to Terezin after the Germans had left. He was very ill, and was treated in quarantine. He returned to his town, but in early 1948, he immigrated to Israel. He did not tell anyone about his Holocaust experiences until the 1960s.

## TAPE I

- 1:01** Peter Lang was born on August 21, 1924, in Iglau (Jihlava), in central Moravia. The population of 33,000 was 50 percent German and 50 percent Czech: 1,200 of them were Jews. Peter's family was middle class and completely assimilated – Peter was not circumcised. His father was a merchant. He had an older sister, Lotte. He went to a German school, but spoke Czech at home. He belonged to the Blue-White Youth group.
- 1:07** He talks about his father who was a soldier in World War I, and was aware of anti-Semitism before Hitler. Peter had to leave public school because of anti-Semitism. He apprenticed as a locksmith in a factory, but had to leave there also because of anti-Semitism. He went to Prague, where he attended an Aliyat Ha-noar school and lived in a Jewish orphanage.
- 1:17** He describes his parents, who were atheists, and the Jewish community in his town.
- 1:21** He describes his life in Prague at the orphanage. He lived later in the old city in Prague, and belonged to the Maccabi.
- 1:31** He describes the school of Aliyat Ha-Noar that prepared him for Aliya to Palestine. He learned Hebrew and various skills. Not all of his teachers and counselors were Zionists; some were Communists.
- 2:13** In March 1939, when Hitler took over Czechoslovakia, Peter's parents were evicted from their home, and ultimately went to the Trebitsch (Trebic) Ghetto.
- 2:16** He talks about his school, studies, sports, and friends. He had a good time. In the winter of 1940, they knew that Poland was conquered, but did not know about the fate of the Jews. They were anxious.
- 2:23** He returned home. He and his father had to go to a labor camp near Trebitsch. He describes the work building train tracks. They lived in barracks and were supervised by Czechs.
- 3:01** He discusses the black market in food.
- 3:07** He describes preparations for the transport to Terezin. The feeling was that the end was near, and one should enjoy everything while it was still possible. There was a great deal of sexual acting out. In May 1942, he and his family were loaded onto a train to Terezin. He describes what they were allowed to take.
- 3:17** He describes their arrival in Terezin. They were taken out of the train and joined the camp, thanks to the political influence of the Zionist movement. Others continued on the train to the East and to extermination. In 1943, they knew about

the Warsaw Ghetto and the death of 150,000 people, but did not know about extermination camps.

- 3:27** He and his father lived in the same building. His mother and sister lived in the women's barracks. He describes their accommodations, food, and work. The general mood was okay. His mother worked as a nurse in the tuberculosis hospital, and his sister worked in the kitchen.

## **TAPE II**

- 4:01** He describes cultural and social activities in Terezin. He lived with six men who were very close friends.
- 4: 10** They knew that the old people died in Terezin, but thought that was normal. He met with his family, and his mother shared her food with him. He felt guilty about that.
- 4:20** He worked in agriculture, and had enough vegetables to eat. But he craved bread.
- 4:25** The Jewish police in Terezin saw to it that there was no stealing. Edelstein was their representative to the Germans.
- 4:33** They were all afraid of transports. People could avoid transports as special favors.
- 5:00** In the summer of 1944, he hid at his mother's hospital to evade a transport, while some of his friends were taken.
- 5:05** Peter describes the transport to Auschwitz with his father, and their arrival there. Peter was told to say that he was 16. After a selection by Mengele, Peter was marched to Birkenau to the Roma camp. He describes the sadism of the old-timers in the camp, who scared them, and the sadism of the guards. He describes his despair and feelings of utter helplessness.
- 5:18** He describes his two weeks in Auschwitz. They were treated like animals. He talks about the selection for work. He was a construction worker like his father. Peter hid when his father, was taken away and was killed. Peter feels guilty that he did not go with his father.
- 5:29** He describes the terrible hunger, and what it did to them physically and psychologically. He feels good that he never stole from his friends. He mentions cannibalism.

- 5:35** He was taken to a forced labor camp near Kaufering.
- 6:01** He mentions women who saved their lives by having sexual relations with Germans.
- 6:03** He talks about working in the fields in Terezin in irrigation. They dug a tunnel from the outside into the camp and smuggled food into the camp. Those who were caught were imprisoned in the fort.
- 6:17** He describes in detail how they smuggled vegetables through the sewer system tunnels that led from the fort into the camp.
- 6:24** Most camp guards were Czech, not German.
- 6:32** He describes the Red Cross visit to the camp.

### **TAPE III**

- 7:01** Peter talks about hunger in Auschwitz. Heavy people died faster than skinny ones. There had been no real hunger in Terezin. Those belonging to Zionist Youth groups had more food.
- 7:13** He was taken by train from Birkenau to Kaufering. They knew children from Mengele's "twins camp", and envied them because Mengele took good care of them. They had enough food and clothing.
- 7:21** He was sent to Kaufering in October 1944. There were 12 forced labor camps. He was in camp 3, which was all Zionist. He describes the camp of 800 people, 30 percent of whom were members of youth groups. They worked for I.G. Farben, building an underground industrial building.
- 8:00** He describes his work in Kaufering, the food, and the barracks.
- 8:13** He was taken by transport to Leibnitz to work in the underground industry. He describes his work, the bad accommodations, and lack of food. They saw bombardments of trains. Thirty percent of the people died every month from dysentery and typhoid. New transports came every month, bringing people to substitute for those who had died.
- 8:23** He says the camp population of 3,000 people consisted of Jews, Communists, homosexuals, and criminals.
- 9:00** He describes his work in the caves in Leibnitz.
- 9:11** He was taken back to Terezin after the Germans had left. He was very sick

and was treated in quarantine.

**9:17** When he recovered, he returned to Prague, and then to his town. He did not tell anyone about what had happened to him until the 1960s.

**9:23** He went to a school for industrial knitting, and then went into the Czech army. In February 1948, he realized the similarity between Communism and Nazism, and decided to immigrate to Israel. He joined the Israeli Defense Forces, later settled in Givat Chaim, and married there.