

Summary of Oral History Interview with Charles Corrin—ENGLISH **RG-50.146.0022**

Charles Corrin, born in Kielecki in March 1925; studied at Yeshiva of grand rabbi of Ostrowiec in Kielecki; period from 1939–1941—Germans, Judenrat; Germans cutting beards of Polish Jews; German army was extremely harsh – curfews; 30,000 habitants; S.S. rounding up Communists, intellectuals—hangings in village square; speaking of his parents and their bakery; grandparents and uncles very religious; studying at Yeshiva, Rabbi Rosen; speaking of his mother—she wanted him to become a rabbi; speaking of the great synagogue; family bakery was requisitioned; speaking of the beginnings of the ghetto—lists, prison—1942; hearing of transports heading east; praying in the cemetery; deportations to Auschwitz; speaking of Lithuanians and Ukrainians; Judenrat doing the work for Hermann Goering; Charles working with his brother in the hopes of not being rounded up; shootings; speaking of ghetto evacuation; Charles being pulled from the line with others—SS verifying work cards; successfully being assigned to the factory; seeing his father for the last time; seeing the transports and trains leaving for Treblinka; smaller ghetto; rabbi of Ostrowiec killed in the square; staying in the small ghetto until liquidation; being transferred to another camp; working in the factory under Jewish police—outside; German searches for money; wearing old clothes from Treblinka-Malkinia; those working in factory—between 18 and 25 years old; 1944—approaching Russians; being put in a train for another camp—Kielce; from Kielce, two possible destinations—Czenstochowa or Auschwitz; arriving in Auschwitz after all night in train; at sunrise, the trains arriving and Jews being brutally sent to barracks; a Jewish prisoner alerting them of gas chambers; stripping and being given clothes; Birkenau—near crematorium 4; transports arriving from Lodz; screams from gas chambers; being sent to "Zigaunerlager"—with gypsies; Charles staying with his brother—not knowing where rest of family sent; being selected for road work in Birkenau; recalling a brutal German kapo—Rudolph; working near railways and seeing two transports per day; seeing Rumkowski; ambulances carrying Zyklon B; allied bombings; evacuation of the camp; Charles' brother leaving; Charles being with Samuel Pizar—going to the showers; being evacuated to Orianenbourg; heading on foot towards Suchsenhauser, near Berlin; Charles sent to Ordruf until end of March, 1945; after roll call (1hr) trucks taking them on work detail in mountains—digging underground missile (V1, V2) ramps; thirst—not even one drop of water; each week trucks bringing cadavers—rolled up like logs; Germans opening annex in Krawinkel—10 kilometers; Charles was lucky—on work details; working on roofs in dead of winter— a German beating prisoners with pickaxe handle, then saw Charles up on roof, and gave him a piece of bread; constructing new barracks with huge logs; remembering a Hungarian Jew asking an S.S. to kill him—S.S. refused; March 1945—speaking of hunger, sleeping conditions; Charles preferring Russians over Poles; leaving on foot to Buchenwald; sleeping standing up; 60 survivors among the 40,000; cadavers littering the road; British arriving just evacuation; prisoners said, "Kill us now if you want, but we're not walking anymore."; seeing other evacuated prisoners on the roads; arriving at Buchenwald; fighting for a drop of soup; April 8—last transport of 5,000 people, including Elie Wiesel; April 9—camp liberated; being put in train for

eight hours, without bread or water; one hundred in each car—people dying every night; surviving on horse meat; being given soup after 15 days; arriving at Theresienstadt; being liberated 10 days later by the Russians; being in the hospital; returning to Lodz, then Ostrowiec in Poland; finding 70% of Jewish homes razed, including synagogues; a brother dying 15 days after arrival at Buchenwald; 50 survivors hidden by Poles, others killed by Poles; learning of another brother being in hospital in Salsheim, then in France and Brazil; Charles staying in France, due to lack of visa; Charles Corrin married with three daughters and four grand-children; remembering the selections—hoping to have a fulfilled life; leaving Umschlagplatz during liquidation and eating non-kosher; recalling the death of his father and brother-in-law, and thinking that one must have faith within your own conscience; being surrounded by Germans when in Poland; Poles refusing to accept Jews—stealing the cache of arms, and killing Jews; Poles denouncing Jews; the refusal of Poles to unite against the enemy; speaking of the camps—Auschwitz was an extermination camp, Majdanek was mixed, no gas chambers in Dora; the free world has a responsibility; extermination of Jews; no surviving cousins; if children his age survived, due to being hidden or going into convents; his wife's parents being denounced; survival depending on finding someone in the kitchen or elsewhere to help them; staying optimistic—one couldn't survive with a defeatist outlook; free world bears a responsibility for the Shoah, along with the Nazis, for their lack of collective response on behalf of humanity.