

<http://collections.ushmm.org>

Contact [reference@ushmm.org](mailto:reference@ushmm.org) for further information about this collection

Imperial War Museum  
Department of Sound Records

Accession No 7419/2

SCHINDLER

Lewis Fagen

Copyright Thames Television : Unrestricted

Access Code : B

LEWIS FAGAN INTERVIEW

7419/2/1

1

191 TAKE 1

Q: Lewis, tell me a little bit about life in Karkow before the war er for a young Jewish boy.

LEWIS: Well, before the war I attended the high school. It was a private Jewish school. And er my father was a business man, he was er distributor and manufacturer of er bicycles. And er we had quite comfortable life. Large family. A lot of friends in school. I had a gorgeous bicycle, and this was a big deal in - in Krakow at that time. Summer time we were going to the country on vacations. And all in all, I must say, that it was quite pleasant because we were in our own environment all the time. (NOT CLEAR) family coming in after Sunday - Sunday afternoon with card games going on in our house. And er school life was er very rich, even outside of er regular school hours, we had all kind of clubs, support clubs. Er we had er chess club, and we were always busy. It was nice altogether.

Q: September 1939 changed that pretty quickly. Tell me about what the immediate impact, as you remember of it, of the first year before the ghetto was started for people like yourself?

LEWIS: Well, er when the Germans were approaching the city, the men ran. There was a fear that the men would - the worst they thought would happen to them is they'll be taken to forced labour camps, so they all ran east. Among them was my father, who also ran away from the German army. My mother, my

191 TAKE 1 CONTD.

7419/2/1

2

LEWIS: CONTD: sister and myself were left in the city. I remember the day that the Germans walked in the city of Krakow there was a rumour going around, they said the French troops trying to help the Polish army in defending Krakow. The first impact, the first few days we didn't even feel that the Germans were there. I was still going to school. After about 2 months they closed the school, and the day they closed the school I walked back and Governor General Frank was coming into Krakow to take over for the German authorities. And they were hanging flags all over the city. And I was stopped on the street with a friend of mine, a school mate of mine, and we were wearing the school uniforms with the numbers and school caps, and he approached us, in civilian clothes, he says, are you Jewish? I says, yes. Can I see your papers? We showed him our school papers. You come with me. And he took us to the fire house and they made us work for about 36 hours hanging up flags er throughout the city of Krakow. Naturally my mother was dying worrying about me, and she didn't know what happened. And this was my first encounter with sort of forced labour. From then on, in the city of Krakow, the Germans brought a van from a firm that was manufacturing cheese, and they called it (NAME) in German, and this van was going throughout the Jewish sector of Krakow and catching people on the street for forced labour. So I - I remember whenever I heard that the (NAME) is coming I ran, and I ran as fast as I could. Er then er during the summer of 1940 they came out with a edict that everybody has - every Jew over the age of 14 or 15 - I can't tell you exactly - must

191 TAKE 1 CONTD.

7419/2/1

3

LEWIS: CONTD: work someplace, and I took out the job in the city botanical gardens. I loved outdoors and er and I worked there for - for a while. Then er during that summer my father returned from the east, which was lucky because we had no means to live on, up to that point it was pretty difficult, and right after he returned they closed up the whole section of Krakow where the Jewish people lived and they were searching from house to house. Now, this was my first horrible experience when they walked into the house and they asked to give up all the valuables and the next thing I - I seen is a young German officer hitting my father, and this made tremendous impact on me because this was the first brutality that I had seen er in that period. And then from then on there were searches going on and on until they formed the ghetto of Krakow. Er we did not get permission to stay in Krakow, so we had to leave Krakow. My father had some friends in the outskirts of Krakow and they offered to share their house with us, and we left. It was a little village called (NAME) where we stayed er for about er oh, close to a year.

Q: Eventually you were rounded up and your whole family were sent into Plashov, weren't they?

LEWIS: Eventually we were sent to ghetto from there.

Q: Perhaps you can tell me about the destruction of the ghetto on March 13th 1943 and how your family were rounded into Plashow and...

191 TAKE 1 CONT'D

7419/2/1

4

Q (Cont'd.) : ... your, how Plashow was.

LEWIS : To be, to be ...  
To be quite frank, I was one of the first to that was rounded up to and taken to Plashow. So I didn't go to Plashow during the liquidation of the ghetto. I went to Plashow a couple of months before and er I was one of the workers who were building the barracks in Plashow. I worked before then I work as an auto mechanic in Stire Dimler works and er then I was dismissed and being that I was without work they send me to Plashow way before the other people were sent to Plashow. So I was not there on the day of rounding up.

Q : Tell me about the breaking up of the gravestones and the making of the road and so on in Plashow.

LEWIS : Right. Well the gravestones were used for building of the road and this was really a heart breaking experience. I did not work on the road detail, I worked more in the with the carpenters building the barracks. However, at night when I was returning, I was hearing stories from the boys who were working on the road detail and they were horrible stories because they were discovering er caskets and er bodies of people who died fifty or sixty or seventy years before that and er in a Jewish religion this is a horrible thing when you destroy the monument and the monuments were used for building the road. ~~In fact, something like this was~~ repeated in Israel when the Jordanian army took over.

Q (Cont'd.) : ... day that they blew up  
the funeral house there?

LEWIS : Yes.

Q : Moving on, do you remember  
the day that Goeth arrived at Plashow?

LEWIS : I remember the day, but I  
I remember that they said that the new  
Commander arrived in Plashow and his name  
is Goeth, but that's all I can say about it,  
until I got to know him and see him for the  
first time in action.

Q : What do you recall from  
seeing Amon Goeth in action? And perhaps  
you could say ... "When I first saw Amon  
Goeth in action"

LEWIS : Er, when I first saw him  
in action was er when we were being led  
er outside of ghetto, outside of Plashow,  
I used to work at that time later on I used  
to work in er metal works, factory called  
(NAME) and we were going in with, as, as  
guards, we were going out every morning and  
returning every evening out to our work.  
My first encounter with Ghert was when we  
were coming out and somebody coming into  
the Ghetto was caught, at that moment, as  
we were coming out, with something in their  
pockets and they were searched and it was  
the first time I have seen a man taking out  
a gun out of his holster and putting into  
somebody's head and shooting him. And that  
left a tremendous impact on me. But later on  
as we were left in Plashow and they wouldn't  
let us go out any more, and even the one, at  
the time I worked for Maditsch

192/1

7419/2/1

5A

Q: Lewis I'll ask you the story again about the first time you encountered Gert's er brutality, and if you can just say the first time I encountered his brutality, and then you can just give me the story quite shortly.

LEWIS: Well the first time I encountered his brutality was when my detail of workers was coming out of the Plashov and at that moment or maybe a moment before people came in who were searched, and evidently something was found on er one of the people, and er Gert without thinking took out a gun out of his holster and put it to his head and shot him, and this was er the first experience er with Gert, and this was the first time in fact that I had seen Gert.

Q: Can you remember any other incidents that you witnessed of ...

LEWIS: Yes I remember the hangings. In which er Gert participated very actively, I remember when people were getting er lashes on their behinds, er 25 or 50 depending on what they've done, and Gert was standing next to the people who were beating those poor souls, and laughing and er I remember many, I remember when Gert was riding a horse and er people were working on a road detail and he took out his gun and shot somebody. So I remember quite vividly. Also at one time *Kadnitsch* sent me with Gerts uniform to *Goeth's villa* and I was sure that once

192/1 CONT.

7419/2/1

6

LEWIS CONT: I knock on the door one of the servants would open the door and I'll leave the uniform and I'll - and I'll run, and I was very surprised when I knock on the door and Gert himself in an undershirt and his high boots er opened the door and as soon as I had seen Gert, I thought oh my God I'm going to faint, because I was afraid something was going to happen to me, but he was quite drunk at that er time and er I handed over the uniform and he took it and shut the door and I left, and I thought myself very lucky that nothing happened to me, because anybody who had anything to do with Gert, there was always some kind of a punishment, the man was a sadist and there's no doubt about it. He was not the only one.

Q: You were lucky to work you told me for - for Maditsch and the conditions there were quite unusual.

LEWIS: Yes.

Q: On the other hand when did you first hear about Schindler and what did you hear about this man?

LEWIS: Well I heard of Schindler all along because er er I had friends, school mates er who stayed in *Emalia* with Schindler, and what I heard about him it was good, in fact there were many people in Plashov who were very anxious to get *Emalia* and Schindlers camp. First of all there weren't abuse



192/1 CONT.

7419/2/1

7

LEWIS CONT:                   in the way the people  
in Plashov were abused, and secondly there  
was more food to be had in Schindlers place  
than there was in Plashov.

---

Q:                               Can you tellme the  
circumstances by which your whole family  
came to leave Plashov.

LEWIS:                         Sure. Er my father  
worked for *Madnitsch* since the inception of  
er *Madnitsch's* works in ghetto, then he  
moved from ghetto to Plashov, and he was  
quite close with *Madnitsch*, not so much with  
*Madnitsch* but his deputy who was Mr. *Titsch*  
who was one absolutely decent German that  
I came across during those years, a  
compassionate man, a decent man, er a  
man really who - who tried to be helpful  
in every respect to anybody he encountered,  
so when we queue- when my father came to  
Plashov after a while when I stopped going  
out to the metalworks, er I got a job with  
(NAME) as a sewing machine mechanic, I  
didn't know anything about sewing machines,  
but what I did for 2 days I was taking a  
machine apart and putting it together,  
and I took apart about 6 7 machines and  
I finally I put together one that worked,  
and that's how I became so interested in  
mechanics. And er at *Madnitsch's* we had a  
decent life while we were working for him,  
I mean once we came down to the camp we  
were treated like everybody else, but while  
we were at work nobody bothered us.

*Madnitsch* had a group around him of people  
that were all friends of him at that time,  
and he was helpful in bringing in extra  
food, soap er I remember when my spectacles

192/1 CONT.

7419/2/1

8

LEWIS CONT:           the city and er when  
we needed extra underwear or whatever  
he was always smuggling it in inhis  
er beautiful limosine. So, I remember  
*Maditsch* as a business man who was making  
money on slave labour, I mean this is  
something that you can't take away, but  
at the same time he did not abuse anybody,  
and if anybody got into trouble with the  
authorities in Plashov he was always  
helpful and trying to get (NOT CLEAR) out  
of the trouble.

193/1

7419/2/1

9

Q: Perhaps you can start  
by saying we heard rumours ...

LEWIS: Er we heard rumours  
in Plashov that er when Schindler er  
was creating er another factory in the  
part of Czechoslovakia, we heard that  
he tried to persuade *Madnitsch* to open a  
factory - a garment factory in the same  
part of Czechoslovakia and bring his workers  
to Czechoslovakia, we did hear about it,  
I don't know exactly what happened or  
why *Madnitsch* decided against it, but it  
seems that *Madnitsch* decided that people who  
were close to him and there were several  
families, there were about 15 20 families  
that he decided that he wants Schindler  
to take to his plant in Czechoslovakia,  
that would be much safer than remaining  
in Plashov and going to a concentration  
camp, and he did, I was among them, my  
whole family, my father, my mother, my  
sister and myself were on the list and  
there were several other families that were  
on the list and er this way we got er to  
*Brimlitz* first to *Gröss-Rosen*

Q: I was just going to  
say before we come to that, do you ever  
remember seeing Schindler around Plashov?

LEWIS: Not really.

Q: Tell me what you felt  
or what you remember feeling when the  
train pulled into *Gröss-Rosen*

193/1 CONT.

7419/2/1

10

LEWIS: Well the train pulled  
into ~~Gross-Rent~~ they opened the doors of the  
cattle cars and when we came out we had  
seen Rapos ...

TALKING TOGETHER

194/1

7419/2/1

11

Q: As I said Lewis, if you can give me your interpretation of the change in Schindler's motivation from when you first arrived, and if you start that by saying when Schindler first arrived.

LEWIS: When Schindler first arrived in Krakow he was basically a business man out to make money during the occupation of Poland, and er as you know he supposedly bought this er plant of another works and he met Mr. Bankier who at that time was the sort of part owner of the plant and er the 2 of them decided to make money on the black market, which they did, and Schindler depended very much on Bankier who was the - another business man - but he also knew the production, and er when the Germans decided that er we have to go to Plashov, Schindler decided that he wants his workers to be protected at his own plant, he brought in people, who were the people, the people were families of Mr. Bankier and my wife by the way was one of them, and families of a bookkeeper and a family of the foreman in the factory, families of mechanic and so there was one large family, and he became friendly with those people, he felt he made money through them er his basic motive was er money, there's no doubt in my mind about it, and slowly some of them got into trouble and they asked Schindler to intervene and Schindler had his ways he was a bon vivant, he was a drinker, he was a womaniser, he threw beautiful parties, he had good connections.

195/1

7419/2/1

12

Q: Lewis as I say if you can do that for me.

LEWIS: Well when Schindler first came this is my impression, when Schindler first came to Krakow, er the main reason was er making money on the black market and he succeeded in it, with the help of um Jewish workers and Jewish manager of the factory. This was the first motivation, whenever one of his friends or er a relative of his friends got into trouble Schindler intervened and he was always successful in getting those people out of the trouble, and I feel that this whole thing escalated into helping a 1,000 people getting out of trouble, eventually I think that Schindler had seen the light that the Germans are going to lose the war and supposedly he was on the list of war criminals in Czechoslovakia, so in order to clean himself, secure his future he decided to save those 1,000 people, whatever the motivation was it's not really important, the important is that he did, because I'm - I would say that probably the majority of his group would have not survived without Schindler, because most of the people from Krakow went to ~~Mauthausen~~ which was a very very tough camp, and 80% of the people perished. So just the mere fact that he created this camp in ~~Birnlitz~~ and he brought us in and he protected us, oh we were starving, we were not er we were not having a picnic there, but at least we were not abused in the way they were abusing people in other camps. This mere fact I would say cleans Schindler of all his crimes that he committed before, and to

195/1 CONT.

7419/2/1

13

LEWIS CONT:                    me he was the saviour  
of a 1,000 people, and that - that's what  
counts.

---

Q:                                    It's a very cynical  
interpretation.

LEWIS:                            It isn't cynical it's  
a fact of life - I - I this is my impression,  
I'm not saying that that's what it was,  
but my impression was that he was smart  
enough - realistic enough to know what's  
waiting for him, and once he got involved  
with a 1,000 people he decided what's  
coming towards the end of the war and he  
decided well let me finish the job and  
er er I will be a saviour of a thousand  
Jews and nobody's going to touch me.

Q:                                    He needn't have stayed  
as long as he did though need he?

LEWIS:                            No. The fact remains  
that he stayed as long as the German  
guards stayed in - in Binnlitz and he didn't  
have to, because the Russians would have  
put their hands on him he was a dead man  
there's no doubt about it, and I remember  
when he made a speech a farewell speech  
which was really touching, and er - er  
he put up microphones and loudspeakers,  
with Churchills victory speech which was  
also a very touching moment for us all. He  
- he did tremendous things er er that  
no other German has ever attempted to do,  
maybe there were some Germans who saved  
a Jew here and there, but there was no other  
case during that war when a German saved  
1,000 Jewish people and it was the only

195/1 CONT.

7419/2/1

14

LEWIS CONT: mistakes that there were more Germans who were saving thousands of people.

Q: Okay can I take you back now to what we were talking about when your first arrived at ~~Griss-Rosen~~ and what your feelings were there, you were on your way to Schindlers safe camp, instead you arrived there.

LEWIS: Oh ~~Griss-Rosen~~ was really a nightmare, when we arrived at first they opened the doors of the cattle truck, when we came out they had the ~~Kapos~~ standing with gloves on their hands and they looked very elegant and they herded us all to one assembly place which they called ~~appellplatz~~, and at that assembly place the first thing they did they ask us all to disrobe, and this was in October, it was er quite cold we all disrobed and the next thing they marched us into a huge tent, that tent should have er I mean there er ... I can't (NOT CLEAR).... The tent was actually built for 50 or 60 people they herded several hundred people into that tent, and my father, myself were standing all the way at the rear of the tent, and there was no air to be had and my father fainted on me, at that moment a friend of mine and myself brought my father, we were fighting with people in order to bring him to the door and er get some fresh air, from that tent they ran us into a bath, they gave us some kind of a crude powder ... excuse me ... before they ran us into the bath they ran us into a - into a huge hole where they had barbers sitting and they were shaving



195/1 CONT.

7419/2/1

LEWIS: our legs and wherever we had the hair, and during the process of shaving they were hurting us and we were bleeding, then they herded us into a bath, they gave us some kind of a powder to wash ourselves with, but as soon as we put the powder on top of our wounds it was burning tremendously and they held off with give us a shower, we were very apprehensive as far as the shower was ... we weren't sure that we are going to get gasses or water, when the water came out it was a great relief. Finally, from that they ran us, it was already night, they ran us to a barrack, where they distributed clothing, I mean they handed out a pair of shoes and a pair of pants and er some kind of a shirt or a sweater, now they didn't bother about the size or what fits or what doesn't fit, and it was really a comical sight when people started putting the clothing on, how some had very short sleeves and a very short ladies sweater, I (NOT CLEAR) got a pair of shoes that were much too small for him, so what we did we started trading amongst each other until everybody was happy, in that barrack was the same situation as the camp, they kept us all er few other people in the place which accommodated maybe 30 or 40 people, so what we did, we slept on the floor with our spreadeagle legs and we fitted one into another, this was the only way they could fit us into the barrack and this is how we slept the first night, and this is how we slept the next night, and the third day I think the angel arrived, Oscar Schindler came and as soon as we have seen Schindler it was like the gates of heaven opening up for us

195/1 CONT.

7419/2/1

16

LEWIS CONT; at that moment everybody felt safe. Schindler is here then nothing will happen to us and sure enough a couple of days later we were transported to Binnlitz. //

7419/2/2

Q: That's remarkable isn't it, the arrival of a German, a member of the Nazi party ...

LEWIS: Well don't forget it was 1944 October and we was writing on the wall, the wars coming to the end and anybody who was smart should've realised that the German are the losers. And he really he gave us so much confidence that he's going to save us that just the sight of Schindler in Gross-Rosen was good enough for us to realise that we're going to survive.

Q: Briefly can you tell me what your feelings were when you saw the women arrive from Auschwitz?

LEWIS: Oh I can tell you we had - we had tremendous moment of fear, ~~my mother and my sister were in Auschwitz~~ and we haven't seen them for weeks and weeks and we worried, we really worried ourselves, when those women arrived, it was one of the greatest joys of my life when I have seen my mother and sister. I knew that my sister was er a little sick, she had a problem with her spine and er I worried, I really did, but that moment when those women arrived it was a moment of the greatest joy, er during all those years.

196/1

7419/2/2

Q: Lewis you were telling me about the atmosphere at Binnlitz on the day that the women arrived, and maybe you can fill me in a little more on that.

LEWIS: Okay, when the women arrived they were put up in a part of the factory that was divided from the part that the men lived. Actually on the first day we couldn't talk to them because the guards forbade it, however there was a little hole in a screen that they put between the mens department and the womens department and through that hole we could converse, so we are all bunching up and trying to get into the hole and we stood in a queue, finally I got to it and I spoke with my mother and she told us about all her horror stories from Auschwitz and the fear that they'd never come out, and er then my sister came and she told me about some of my school mates, women that she met in Auschwitz, by the way, two of them that she told me about, and this was October 1944, had never survived, er the following morning when we were already in the plant downstairs we could elaborate more on our experiences, on their experiences, it was really a day of the greatest joy to everybody, because we really after a while we did not believe that they'll ever come out of Auschwitz, and I think this is the only case of a group that came out of Auschwitz, in the book I found out why, I - at that time I didn't know, I have no idea how this - he did do it.

196/1 CONT.

7419/2/2

18

Q: Tell me a bit about work at Binnlitz. What did you used to do, what was production.

LEWIS: I was assigned to the tool department, I was a tool maker I had no idea how to make tools, I worked under a man who really was an expert in this and had 3 helpers, and neither one of the helpers knew what they were doing, none of the tools that we were - we were making tools for big presses, none of the tools that we made were ever working, so the plant was working every day but nothing ever came out of it, and we always wondered how did it happen, how did it - German authorities allow him to do it, what will happen somebody comes into the plant and sees what's going on. Then I found out it was way after the war that Schindler was buying some of the products on the black market and delivering to the German authorities as products coming out of his factory.

Q: Do you ever remember inspections by - from people from the ammunitions inspectorate, or inspections by other top Germans at Binnlitz?

LEWIS: There were several inspections, I don't remember any one of them, the only one I remember is when Gert, after he was discredited, came to the plant and when we had seen Gert, fear got hold of us again, because just the sight of him, he was in civilian clothes

196/1 CONT. 7419/2/2

19

LEWIS CONT:                   and he was walking with Schindler, and why Schindler walk - I remember a little bit behind him he was giving us the eye, like he wanted to say now here is a man who was such a sadist killing Jewish people and now he's nothing, so don't have any fear of him, and this was great, I remember it exactly how he went to the tool department, he was giving us the eye. ~~This was - this~~ was one of the ways you know, that's why I'm saying that whatever Schindlers motivation was, it's really not that important. Important is the fact that he did go through saving whole families.

Q:                                   You were a great friend of *Janek* Dresner, and I think you kept your friendship at *Brinnlitz*.

LEWIS\*                           Right.

Q:                                   You must know the story of the sabotage.

LEWIS:                           Yes.

Q:                                   Tell me the story of the sabotage.

LEWIS:                           Well I don't remember the story exactly, and I don't want to repeat what I read in the book because er but er ... *Janek* was accused of sabotaging and er there was one German who was er actually not a German, he was of Dutch descent, he was one of the head of the guards or whatever, and er he wanted to make a big case out of it, and he

196/1 CONT.

7419/2/2

LEWIS CONT: reported to *Liebold* who was the camp commander, and *er Liebold* wanted to report it to Berlin, I think eventually *Schindler er* persuaded *Liebold* not to do it, he had the power of persuading, whatever it was drinks or women or whatever.

Q: *Liebold* was a thorn in everyone's flesh at *brinnlitz*.

LEWIS: Oh he was, he was.

Q: Tell me a bit about *Liebold* and what you now know the way that *Schindler* dealt with *Liebold*?

LEWIS: *Liebold* was a handsome man, the rumour was that *Liebold* was in, before he joined the Nazi party - he was a barber, he was *Untersturmführer* I think, which was a - quite a high rank in the SS, *It* would be up to *Liebold*, I don't think anyone of us would remain alive today. However *Schindler* has his way, he has his ways of dealing with them, and *er* the rumour, I am only talking about rumours because none of us was *er* knew what was going on, but also that *Schindler* was providing some entertainment for him, and *er* he was paying him and bribing him and he had a control over him you see.

Q: I know that your family had reason to thank Mrs. *Schindler* for her role in things, perhaps you can tell me at some length if you like about Mrs. *Schindler* and what you feel about her role and so on?

196/1 CONT.

7419/2/2

21

LEWIS: Well Mrs. Schindler, well my sister was in the infirmary for quite a while. Mrs. Schindler was quite often bringing in all kind of special food for her, and I remember distinctly that at one time she approached me and she brought an apple and she said bring it to your sister, which I did, if you would know the conditions, during the war, er the attitude of Germans to the slave labour and the Jews, you - nobody would believe that a German woman would do it, another case with Mrs. Schindler was when er my father thought somebody that one of my lenses broke and that somebody said I don't remember who it was, said I'll approach Mrs. Schindler about it, which he did, and Mrs. Schindler ask that anybody have a prescription for your lenses, I said yes there is a gentleman in Krakow with a prescription, she said well one of the workers is going to Krakow and I'll see to it that he gets the prescription and gets you another lens, which he did, he came back and he brought the lens for my eye glasses and this was a tremendous thing for me.

Q: You were a slave labourer in a concentration camp ...

LEWIS: Right... right, this was unheard of also.

Q: Perhaps you could say something like I was a slave labourer in a concentration camp .....

196/1 CONT.

7419/2/2

22

LEWIS: Right.

Q: .... my glasses broke and through Mrs. Schindler. Tell me the story from a different way ...

LEWIS: Okay, er I was a slave labourer in the concentration camp.

TALKING TOGETHER

LEWIS: I was a slave labourer in a concentration camp and my glasses broke, and Mrs. Schindler arranged to get another pair of glasses from Krakow where I had a prescription with some friends, to get another pair of glasses brought to me *to Brinnlitz*. And this was unheard of, I mean a lot of people lost their glasses, lost their lenses in many concentration camps and they had just to go about it blindly, because it was unheard of that they should get another pair. The Germans wouldn't provide it. So in this respect it was sort of a saviour for me.

Q: Perhaps you can tell me briefly the thing about what Chris was saying about the sacrilege involved in making the road from tombstones.

LEWIS: Well when they built Plashov, which was built on a Jewish cemetery, and they used er tombstones in order to build the roads, it was sacrilege as far as the Jewish people were concerned, the greatest sacrilege, because in Jewish religion, er that person is like a holy



196/1 CONT.

7419/2/2

LEWIS CONT:                 person, er the Jewish  
people visit the graves at least once a  
year and this is for generation, the  
great-grandfather, the grandfather,  
the parents and once we knew that the  
tombstones were taken off, we knew that  
if anyone of the family would ever  
survive would never find the tombstones  
in order to pray, pray on.

O:                                 Who do you think  
Oscar Schindler was?

LEWIS:                         Well I think that  
Oscar Schindler was er basically a ...

197/1

7419/2/2

24

Q: My questions are always short it's the answers that ....

TALKING TOGETHER

Q: No, don't keep them too short. Lewis tell me again the story of Mrs. Schindler and the apple, from the beginning.

LEWIS: Er, when my sister was at the infirmary er in *Brimlitz* er Mrs. Schindler quite often used to bring her extra rations of food, er but one day she approached me in - in the factory and she brought an apple, and she said I want you to bring that apple to your sister, and I felt that this was the greatest thing, that I gave a slave labourer and this German woman, the wife of the director of the plant comes to me and brings me an apple in order to feed my sister, because we were really starving in *Brimlitz* with all Schindler's (NOT CLEAR) and trying to get food on the black market, we were - we didn't get enough food to sustain ourselves, this was to me a great gesture.

Q: What was your contact with Schindler himself?

LEWIS: No contact at all.

Q: Um as you know Schindler obtained a whole bunch of material, er cloth er towards the end of the war, and tell me the story of the cloth as you remember it.

197/1 CONT.

7419/2/2

25

LEWIS: Er that factory which Schindler built for us was previously a textile factory and in the warehouse they had a stack of clothes that they manufactured previously. At the end of the war Schindler decided to distribute that cloth er to all the people in the factory, and each one of us got the same amount of cloth, in fact I tell you that this cloth was lifesaver, because out of this cloth my mother made for me a shirt and pajamas and the same for my father, and women made blouses and skirts, after all all we had is a striped suit (NOT CLEAR) and this was the first civilian clothing that we obtained through that cloth.

Q: The cloth was also worth a lot of money wasn't it?

LEWIS: Well I don't know whether, there were some people probably who did sell it because there was a shortage of everything at the end of the war, but we didn't, we used it, we utilised it.

Q: Could you tell me as much detail as you remember, the occasion when Schindler set up speakers in the factory for Churchill's victory broadcast.

198/1

7419/2/2

26

Q: Lewis like I say, if you can start by saying on the last day of the war, you can be as atmospheric as you like in your detail.

---

LEWIS: On the last day of the war was a moment I never forget in my life, Schindler set up speakers in the plant and announced that we are going to listen to Churchill's victory speech, but there weren't that many people who understood English, however the atmosphere was sort of electrical, everybody stood at attention and listen to a speech they couldn't understand the words, but sort of they could feel the - the meaning of that speech, I took some English lessons before the war, and here and there I understood some passages of the speech, and it was one of the greatest moments, because at that moment we realised that we are safe that we are home, that we survived. We did not know that we were so few of us that survived, but we knew that we did, and that is - that Churchill's speech er gave us a sort of a lift, emotional lift, the realisation that the war is coming to the end. The Western Front I think was finished, but I think the Russians were still fighting the Germans or they didn't reach Berlin yet. So we realised that the war is at the end and we are safe, by that time the - all of the German guards left and I think that same day er Schindler left with his escort.

198/1 CONT.

7419/2/2

27

Q: Tell me about your memory, because the Churchill speech wasn't the only speech that day, er because Schindler himself ...

LEWIS: Schindler gave himself a farewell speech.

#### TALKING TOGETHER

LEWIS: Schindler always gave other speeches at that time, but to be quite frank I wasn't present at it, because at that time we had sort of a little underground cell and I *partook in it* and we were already busy distributing the weapons and so on in order to defend ourselves if the Germans decided to attack in the last moment.

Q: You've just reminded me about that, I meant to ask you about that - the underground. Tell me about how the underground that worked inside er *Brimlitz* obtained it's weapons, now that you know, now you know the story?

LEWIS: It was very hush hush eventhose that were brought into the underground didn't know about the others who were in it, when the war was over I realised that I was in a group sort of created by *bejski* and I didn't know about it. I was brought by one person and I knew about this person, but I felt that Schindler was involved in it, because Schindler transferred me about 2 weeks before the end of the war into a - an electrical transformer, where there were

198/1 CONT.

7419/2/2

LEWIS CONT:               bales of wires and under those wires there were er hidden weapons and not that many weapons, I mean a few guns, there's er a few pistols, revolvers whatever and my job was to make sure the German, who was in charge of electrical transformers would not discover it.

Q:                         You now know where those weapons came from don't you, and perhaps you can tell me what you know about that?

LEWIS:                    What I thought at that time was that the Czech underground was providing the weapons, but after the war I was told that Schindler was buying them, I still don't know which one is true story, but the fact is that Schindler knew about it, participated in it, and for a German and a member of a Nazi party, this was unheard of.

Q:                         You were saved by just that same person, a German, a member of the Nazi ... Your whole family was saved other than your sister ultimately, um ... that's quite remarkable though isn't it?

LEWIS:                    Well it is remarkable that er families were saved, there were very few families that survived the war as a family, er in fact my parents are still alive and they are here, they are in my 80's, my wife's mother survived and she's here and she's in her 80's, and er many of the survivors cannot understand how was

198/1 CONT.

7419/2/2

29

LEWIS CONT:               it that we were in  
the concentration camp and we still had  
parents.

Q:                           How is it?

LEWIS:                   Well thanks to  
Schinclers efforts in saving whole families  
we are here and we survived.

Q:                           Can I ask you to put  
that a slightly different way, cause it's  
a very important point ...

LEWIS:                   Okay.

Q:                           If you could start by  
saying thanks to Schindler's efforts my  
whole family survived, my parents are  
still in their 80's ...

LEWIS:                   I don't want to say  
because of my sister who didn't, that's  
why, that I want to put it that way.

MAN IN BACKGROUND

LEWIS:                   ER/ thanks to Schindler's  
efforts er we survived er as a family, I  
still have parents alive today, they are  
in their 80's and er we realise that we  
are very few survivors who survived as  
a family, there are very few who have  
parents, and all my friends are survivors  
are quite envious of us, that my wife and  
myself have parents, and my children have  
grandparents, not very few, very few  
survivors, children of survivors have  
grandparents.

198/1 CONT.

7419/2/2

Q: I know you don't like to speculate about Schindler's motivations, but I also know you've got some quite good thoughts about how they changed during the times.

LEWIS: We've discussed that.

Q: I'd like you to get it again.

LEWIS: Many times er I thought what motivated Schindler to do it. And I speculated myself er in fact after the war I spoke with Schindler, but I never got a clear answer on it. I feel that er a man who was basically out to get money met some Jewish people who were helping him in his effort of black market dealing, and er he decided that he's going to make good to them for their help, and it all escalated into a great effort of saving them, their families, their friends and it escalated into a thousand people, I don't think Schindler ever thought of embarking on this kind of a project. I don't think he had - he had it on his mind, basically er when the war started he was a Nazi ...





Q : We were talking about your impressions of Oscar again. Let's try it once more.

FAGAN : Er, my impressions of Oscar Schindler. What made him do what he did. Oscar Schindler came to Krakow in order to make money. There's no doubt about it. And he was successful in it. He took over a factory which was owned by Jewish people and he worked with them in order to promote his financial well being. He was selling the products on the black market and naturally without the help of the experts in the plant, he could not do it. So he got friendly with these people besides they knew all about his activities and er they were helpful to him, so he decided to be helpful to them. He got involved with them, he got involved with their families, he brought in the families into his factory er in order to er protect them also. Whenever anyone among those families was in need of help with the authorities .

START AGAIN

FAGAN : Oscar Schindler came to Krakow in order to make money. There's no doubt about it. He got friendly with some Jewish people who were working in the factory and he decided to protect them as much as he could. Because they were the tools of his aim in making financial gain during the occupation. While he was doing it, he also got involved with the families. He brought in the families into his plant and then every family had friends, he brought the friends into the plan and it all escalated into a thousand people. Toward the end of the war, Oscar decided that he wants to protect his

7419/2/2

FAGAN (Cont'd.) : .... people would survive and will be able to tell the story like we're telling now about him being a saviour and there's no doubt about it that he was a saviour. Because he saved all complete families. And this is a unique case in the history of the second world war where a German saved a thousand people.

Q : I've just seen you with Mrs Schindler downstairs and what you've given me is a very cynical interpretation of how you, a complete stranger to Schindler was saved with your mother, your father, your wife.

FAGAN : Well, my wife was not my wife at the time.

Q : But your wife was saved. With her mother.

FAGAN : Yes.

Q : Are you sure you don't want to reconsider that?

FAGAN : You mean you want me to reconsider?

Q : No, I don't.

FAGAN : Are we on the record now?

Q : No, we're on the record.

FAGAN : On the record. Well, I can tell you one thing. That I still feel that without Schindler, probably a good

percentage of us would not have survived.

FAGAN (Cont'd.) :           And there is no doubt  
in my mind. That we only survived because  
of Schindler's activities. Of Schindler's  
manouvring. And a thousand people can say  
that they owe their lives to Oscar Schindler.

Q :                            You mentioned that  
whole thing about his zest for life.

FAGAN :                      Among other speculations  
that I speculated myself, why did he do it?

~~Schindler was a man who had a zest for life.~~

And er he met people, he got to like them  
and he felt, why should those people get  
killed? Why can't I do something in order  
to protect them and make sure that they  
survive this horrible haulocaust? And this  
is another speculation of mine why I think  
Schindler could have done it and then he was  
a little bit irresponsible because it really  
took a man who was irresponsible but at the  
same time a man who did not realise what  
the consequences would be. The way he's  
done it he took chances with his own life.  
And there is, there is no doubt that he  
contributed to the survival of a thousand  
people and among them whole families.

Q :                            Enough. Very good.  
Thank you very much indeed. I hope it wasn't  
too torturous for you.

CUT