

Imperial War Museum
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SCHINDLER
Viktor Lewis

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JON: Mr. Lewis I was just going to ask you about what you heard when you were in Plaszow about the incident when ~~Goeth~~ ^{GOETH} shot Diana ~~Witter~~ ^{REITER REITER}, ~~Witter~~ wasn't that her name?

VIKTOR: **I THINK IT WAS REITER.**
~~I don't know.~~

JON: Yeah, perhaps you could - you could tell me about that.

VIKTOR: **ER-** I wasn't present, but I know that er a person like this was shot by ~~Goeth~~ ^{GOETH}.

JON: What was life like in Plas in the time you were there.

VIKTOR: When I was there ~~they~~ ^{IT} ~~was~~ ^{WAS} very hard from the beginning. There was no kitchen, and at this time I was one of the first one in in Plashow. I came up in December 1942 and I was working for ~~...~~ ^{... AND ... BUILDING BARRACKS -} ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ ^{AND} the roads, and other things. ~~at~~ ^{AND} this time there was only one barrack for men. There were no women at this time, ~~And~~ ^{AND} er life was very hard, didn't have no food, and we had rushing to work, I would say, at least 18 hours a day. That's all I can tell you at this time.

JON: How did you come to get on to Schindler's list because you were not part of the group who worked at the enamel factory.

VIKTOR: No, I was not ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~.
PART OF THE GROUP.

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JON: Can you just start that again after I finish speaking.

VIKTOR: I was not one of the group from er ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ ... **WHAT'S THE NAME OF THE FACTORY?**

JON: Let me just ask the question ... but you can just say from the enamel factory. So perhaps ... I'll ask the question again and if you could just tell me from the beginning, you know why - how you came to be on the list.

VIKTOR: Well on the list to **BRINNLITZ. PUT BY MARCEL GOLDBERG** ~~(NAME)~~ I was ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ on the list to **BRINNLITZ.** ~~(NAME)~~. Why, I cannot answer, I just asked him to put me on it and er he put me on it, my name was put on.

JON: Why did you think it would be a good thing to be on that list?

VIKTOR: For me it was a good thing to be on the list, because er prior to this er shipment, I was beaten up by 2 SS men, So I want to get away from them, as soon as possible from Plaszców and I don't care where that - I go, And I went to Marcel, and told him about it, he know about it, I was beaten up 2 or 3 days before, And er that's the way how he put me on the list.

JON: Did you have to pay?

VIKTOR: No, I did not.

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BRINNLITZ

JON: Inside (~~NAME~~) you got involved with the underground didn't you?

VIKTOR: Right.

JON: Could you tell me from the beginning, and you can give me as much detail as you like, about how the underground operated inside the Schindler camp at **BRINNLITZ** (~~NAME~~), and if you could say at the beginning something like inside the Schindler camp at **BRINNLITZ** (~~NAME~~) I was in the underground and then tell me about it.

VIKTOR: **BRINNLITZ** Inside, in Schindlers camp in (~~NAME~~) I was in the underground, and how this started I will tell you how. One night I was called, I was waked up and called to a kitchen of this particular camp, and coming up there you were seeing few people, few men whom I didn't know, There were people from, like I said before, from the camp er (~~NOT CLEAR~~). **[WHAT'S THE NAME?]**

JON: It doesn't matter about the names, they're not so important, the names of people of the camps.

VIKTOR: ... camp er ...

JON: BUDZYN

VICTOR: RIGHT.

JON: Okay let's start it again, and er if you want to say just how you got involved and then tell me how the weapons came and so on.

VIKTOR: Oh you want to know how - how ...

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JON: Yes, yes, absolutely.
Um ... How much is left on this?... So I'll ask this question again and as like before you can say inside the camp, Schindlers camp I became involved in the underground, the people from *Budzyn* called me up in the middle of the night to come and talk and so on and then tell me about how the weapons came. Tell me about the underground at Schindlers camp.

VIKTOR: Inside the camp I was called, so joined the underground, what I did. And how the weapons came was smuggled through er boy - Czechoslovakian boy, I would say aged of 9, between 9 and 11 years, He used to come to er ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ *SHOE HORSE COTTAGE* what they used to make the ironwork, and *UP-THERE* *JOE JONAS,* ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ he was the guy who picked it up from the little guy and give it to the chairman of the underground.

WAS A MAN NAMED

JON: So you used to get weapons smuggled in from a nearby village by a Czech. boy and these weapons came into the camp at ~~(NAME)~~ *BRINNITZ.*

VIKTOR: The weapons came into the camp from under - from the Czechish underground, where they were in forest nearby, around 5 nights a week.

JON: Inside the camp what did the underground people do, what were you trying to do.

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GROUND, AND

VIKTOR: Inside the underground
~~they were telling people~~ **THERE WAS ...?** **JOINED THE UNDER-**
~~(NOT CLEAR)~~

one didn't know the other one who was in it, I did not know who the next guy was until liberation. After liberation, then I knew who was a member of the underground.

JON: What was the intention of the underground inside Schindlers camp?

VIKTOR: The intention was ... the Czechish people let us know - they let us know that we're supposed to be shot and ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ a mile, two miles away. **THE GRAVE WAS PREPARED SOMEWHERE**
ON IT - WE SHOULD, TOO -
So they acted ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ start fighting and they would come to help us out.

JON: Did you ever have any connections with the underground which was supplied with weapons provided by Schindler?

VIKTOR: **DON'T**
I know nothing about it.

JON: What happened when Schindler left and you were waiting to be liberated?

VIKTOR: I was present when Schindler left from - from camp, and I was present, and I ~~SAW - EVEN~~ shake hands with him when he left. What happened then we ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ **....? PEOPLE** then we knew each other ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ **WHO THE GROUP IS** because the chairman of the underground called a meeting and give everyone assignment to this particular

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VIKTOR CONT: from Nazis, from er soldiers, army, and we had to keep people quiet because there was er around betwen 12 and 15 hundred people in the camp, we had to keep the camp closed, so nobody was outside know that there is somebody living here in this camp.

JON: Was there any violence against the guards after the end of the war.

VIKTOR: There was violence against the guards, there was some shooting against the guards. I was not present at it but I know there was and I have ~~IT~~ **IT**.
THERE WAS
(~~NOT CLEAR~~) violence against the guards.

JON: Can I ask you that question again, and could you answer it by telling me about the, how much have I got left ... fine. If you could just answer it by telling me about the hanging. Er was there any violence against the guards?

VIKTOR: Which ~~hanging?~~ **HANGING?**

JON: The er you remember the hanging ...

VIKTOR: Right, ~~The hanging of the (NAME) woman, against the guards.~~ **KAPOMAN**

JON: YES

VIKTOR: AGAINST THE GUARDS -

JON: Well I suppose the ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ **KAPO** is better way yes, was there any violence at the end of the war?

VIKTOR: Violence against whom?

JON: LETS COT -----

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JON: Um Mr. Lewis I'm going to ask you in a better way that question. Um can you tell me the story of the hanging that took place immediately after the war, and perhaps if you could start it by saying immediately after the war, someone got hung, or however you want to say it. We're just going to wait for the airplane to go by, unfortunately the sound is very sensitive to the noise of airplanes or police sirens and there ... okay... no. .. Shall we cut? Um Mr. Lewis perhaps you could tell me the story of the hanging and as I say if you could start by saying immediately after the war finished, Schindler left and then ...

VIKTOR: Er immediately after the war finished, Schindler left and the factory was closed up, like I told you before, by the underground, between our people ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ who was a Russian

-I MEAN BETWEEN THE ... WAS A MAN NAMED ILYA DOMNIKOV

boy aged around 24 at this time. He brought this German ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ and ask him to climb the ladder ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~

BY -
PEOPLE FROM THE UNDERGROUND
KAPO MAN
AND OPEN IT UNDER

hang him up. I won't say that it was by force but he hang, I was there, I saw it, and I would say that I was not further out than 5 feet away from it, and nobody stopped it and er everybody was clapping hands.

HIM. HE WAS GOING TO HIM.

JON: -[OVERLAP] WHY -

JON: Why did people want to hang this ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~

KAPO?

VIKTOR: Because the group **WHAT** **IN THE** ~~would~~ came ~~and they~~ train, the frozen train, told us that he was murdering, on

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JON: Okay let me ask the question again, not because your answer wasn't very good, but because it would be nice to get the story in one bit without my questions, Um so I'm going to ask you again about the hanging, if you can say that **A** (~~NAME~~) **KAPO** was hung and he was hung because of the reason people who came in the train said, Um was there any violence, anyone killed immediately after the war?

VIKTOR: ER there was one man hanged immediately after the war, he was a **KAPOMAN** (~~NAME~~) who came with the train, with the frozen train, and he was hanged because people did - people who came with them said that he was killing people on the way er to our camp.

JON: Was there any other vengeance against anyone else after Schindler left?

VIKTOR: No, no, I won't I won't
I DON'T - I didn't see any other work of vengeance after Schindler went. There was one shooting in - in the yard, er this I - I remember, there was some kind of a shooting in a yard, but I don't know what about.

JON: Can you tell me the story, what you remember, when you went to open up the frozen train?

VIKTOR: Er, I remember that we put some straw underneath the train, and we lit it up and waited **A WHILE** ~~away~~ until the ice melted, and **WE** opened the door of the train we saw the bodies lying on the

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VIKTOR CONT:

floor, frozen.

SCHINDLER
~~Strangely~~

- Schindler was present at this time, at the train, and we had, I was called and we had a little hospital in the camp, and we brought all those people into this hospital, ~~and that little~~ **THE DOCTOR OF THE** hospital was **DR. HELSTEIN.**
~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ **A** And that's all I can tell you about it.

JON:

Do you remember what your reaction was when you saw the bodies, when you saw the people and what Schindler's reaction was when he saw the bodies and saw the people?

VIKTOR:

I remember that everybody was saying oh my God, oh my God, and Schindler also was - the same reaction ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ **WAS ON SCHINDLER, TOO.**

JON:

Why, what did it look like?

VIKTOR:

It looked like dead bodies, frozen hard with ice, **That's** how they looked.

JON:

Can I ask you again the question again, just so we can get it in a different way um if we have the story from the beginning about how you opened the truck and then what you saw inside and then what your reaction was and what Schindler's was, so tell me the story about ...

TALKING TOGETHER

PLANE O/HEAD TALK

EVENTUALLY CUT

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JON: Mr. Lewis I was asking you the story again about the frozen train and you were going to tell me the whole story.

VIKTOR: At er frozen train I was present by opening the frozen train, working on it, and er they - we put some straw underneath the train, lit it up, and waited till the wagons got er free of ice, ~~When~~ we opened it - the train, the door trains, we saw people lying on the floor frozen, some frozen to death, I - I - I - I don't know from the frozen. Doctors **HILSTEIN** ~~(NAME)~~ give orders to us we should to bring the old bodies into the hospital. The reaction of, our reactions to after opening the door, was not to er ... couldn't even talk about, everybody ^{YELLED} oh my God. ~~ER -~~ ^{ER -} Schindler was present at this time too, ^{YELLED IT - ER - GOD,} And he also ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ God will help me. ^{WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?} And I would say would took at least 6 to ^{WORKING THROUGH - WE} around 6 hours ~~(NOT CLEAR)~~ move everybody out from this train, I also remember this was in the evening, and going through the night, nighttime, ^{And} that's all ~~of course~~ what I will have to say about it.

JON. FINE. LET'S CUT.